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# commonweal

## WELFARE THE REAL CHISELERS

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**THE CATHOLIC CRISIS**
GEORGE A. LINDBECK

**ON SEEING 'NASHVILLE' IN NASHVILLE**
NEIL J. O'CONNELL

**GOD, POLITICS AND LINCOLN'S PEW**
RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

**POLITICS AND POLITICIANS**
SISYPHUS

**IRELAND: A BOOST FOR COSGRAVE**
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**THE ACID TEST: THE C.I.A.**
PETER STEINFELS

**NIXON'S REVENGE?** THOMAS POWERS

**STOPPARD'S TRAVESTIES** GERALD WEALES

**ALSO:** GENE H. BELL, JOHN HEIDENRY, JAMES W. CAREY, PETER WOOD, STU COHEN, DENNIS VELLUCCI

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# NEWS & VIEWS

### The Peace People

The peace witness goes on, relegated though it may be by much of the media to the fringes of their interests. (The Berrigan brothers received only one paragraph in the Jan. 20 *New York Times*, when they and seven others chose jail over a fine at sentencing for their Nov. 26 peace demonstration at the White House.) So this round-up, in case you missed any—or all—of recent peace happenings. . . .

To begin with, the Diocese of Richmond. Weeks before the hand-writing went on the wall for the draft lottery, it had barred the use of Catholic schools as registration centers for the Selective Service System. Separation of church and state "is a two-way street," said Bishop Walter F. Sullivan.

There appears to have been some carry-over pique in the bishop's action, traceable to the "excessive entanglement" ruling of a few years ago by the Supreme Court blocking public aid to non-public schools. Nevertheless, the decision did serve the cause of peace. As Bishop Sullivan pointed out, the use of religious property for the draft registration could have put undue pressure on young men who may have felt conscience-bound not to register.

With respect to the draft lottery, an inter-group effort was under way promoting a "think before you register" campaign among the 1.6 million young men who have turned 18 in the past year and who now are theoretically eligible for a draft.

Organizations like the Fellowship of Reconciliation were urging young people to place stress on moral awareness over legal obligation. As it turned out young men were spared decision by the budget cuts to Selective Service made possible by the shift to the all-volunteer military force. That's serendipity, folks. And to think that we have Richard Nixon to thank.

Meanwhile, on another level of involvement, the Catholic Peace Fellowship is co-sponsoring a "continental walk for disarmament and social justice." A six-car caravan group started out from the Canadian border in the State of Washington, switched to foot in Ukiah, 100 miles north of San Francisco, and aims to arrive in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 2—Gandhi's birthday.

En route—via Los Angeles, Phoenix, Amarillo, Kansas City, St. Louis, Chicago and Cleveland—they will pick up local marchers and focus on local issues. In Portland, it was on the need for more day-care centers; in Seattle, on the funds being lavished on the Trident submarine.

Supporting organizations will help keep the ranks replenished — organizations such as the War Resisters League, American Friends Service Committee, the Socialist party, Sane, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and many more. Gensuikyo, a Japanese peace group, is sending four teams of Buddhist monks, four monks to each team, each to walk 1,000 miles of the main route. (There will be feed-in marches from Dallas, Detroit, Toronto, Boston, Montgomery and other cities.)

The purposes of the walk are multiple: to raise the issue of disarmament through unilateral action; to educate about nonviolent resistance; to demonstrate how global and domestic and economic problems are interconnected with militarism and the causes of war; and—not least—to recast the significance of the Bicentennial in light of the arms race and related problems.

Those anxious to know where the walk will be and when, and how they can help, can be in touch with Joanne Sheehan at the Catholic Peace Fellowship office, 339 Lafayette Street, New York, N.Y. 10012.

### Europe's Muddle

Ex-*Commonweal* columnist and associate editor William Pfaff reflects in a recent *New Yorker* on post-Marxist Europe.

"For many, it becomes disconcertingly clear," writes Pfaff, "that a structure of deliberate fictions has sustained certain basic changes in Western European politics. In France and Italy, these changes have allowed Communists to be readmitted to a political process from which, for many years, they were excluded—or resolutely excluded themselves. The same could happen before long in Spain. The fact is that Europe has been compelled to turn to its Communist parties in default of a more modern and relevant political opposition."

But the Communist parties persist in scrambling their opportunities and Europe's future. Pfaff continues:

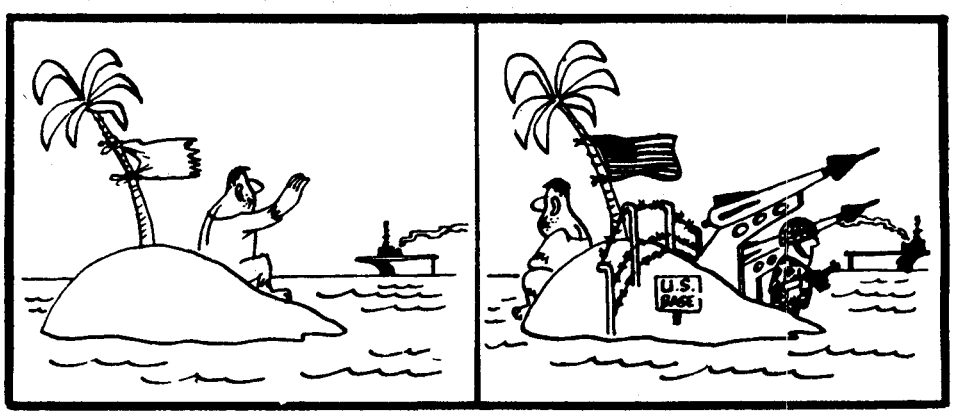
"Every time the Western Communists have found themselves on the brink of accommodation with modern reality, they perversely have turned back, or have been turned back by some Soviet atrocity for which they—most of them—stubbornly assume responsibility: the Moscow trials, the purges, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Now the Portuguese Communists have made their contribution. Just as the Portuguese people emerge, blinking and astonished, into the twentieth century, the Communists push them—and the rest of Western Europe—back into the anachronism of the Communist struggle."

### Odds and Ends

—They're making book in England on the next Archbishop of Westminster. Ladbroke's, Britain's Jimmy the Greek, has Auxiliary Bishop Alan Clark of Northampton the favorite at odds of 7 to 4. Bishop Derek Worlock of Portsmouth is at 9 to 4. The long-shot in third place is Archbishop George P. Dwyer of Birmingham at 9 to 2.

—A recent issue of a Harvard newsletter included a narrative that drew extensively on the writings of Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison, '08, Ph.D. '12, Litt.D. '36, Trumbull Professor of American History Emeritus, etc., etc., etc. Alas, the admiral's name was spelled "Morrison" throughout. "Heavens," complained one correspondent. "That's like spelling God with two d's!"

JOHN DEEDY




LADOC, Jan.-Feb., 1976



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# CORRESPONDENCE

### Post-Medical Subjects

Milwaukee, Wisc.

*To the Editors:* While making some excellent points, Patrick and Carol Altekruse Berger [Dec. 5] are bedeviled by the wrong question . . . the same question that tripped Judge Robert Muir, Jr. in the Quinlan case. The real question is not whether Karen Quinlan's life is "a life worth living"; it is, rather: what is the meaning of medicine in what remains of the life of Karen Quinlan? *Medicine* comes from the Latin *mederi* which means "to heal." Medicine is the healing science. Where healing is impossible, we no longer have a *medical* situation.

Karen Quinlan's life is irretrievably post-personal. In no true sense can she be healed. What is going on in that New Jersey hospital in her case is not medicine.

Judge Muir was partly right. Turning off the respirator is "a medical decision" in the sense that physicians can determine in a case like this when a patient is beyond the reach of the healing science. At that point, all medical (healing) equipment can obviously be discontinued. Further use of that equipment (unless in connection with another healing exercise such as organ transplantation) could only show a tendentially idolatrous absolutizing of vestigial physical life-signs and a taboo-ridden inability to distinguish between healable and non-healable subjects.

The question is not whether Karen's life is worth living but whether medicine is worth practicing on post-personal and post-medical subjects.

DANIEL C. MAGUIRE
Theology Department,
Marquette University

### Zionism

Port Washington, N.Y.

*To the Editors:* In reply to the article on the Zionism Resolution (under

*(Continued on page 126)*

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## RELIGIOUS FUND-RAISING

One of the strengths of American Catholicism has been the willingness of people to support its good works with contributions large but more often small and sacrificial. For many, therefore, it is disillusioning to follow the running story of the Pallotine Fathers of Baltimore: how the Pallotines reportedly lent Maryland Governor Marvin Mandel $54,000 used to help pay his 1974 divorce settlement; how the Pallotines allegedly cooperated in a 1971 fund appeal for Senator Edmund S. Muskie, shortly before he became a candidate for President; how of between $8 million and $15 million raised annually, only a fraction of the sum—$746,685 in 1974, for instance—finds its way in cash and supplies to the needy missions of its appeals; how millions of Pallotine dollars have been invested in Maryland and Florida real estate.

The disillusionment would be easier to bear if the Pallotine story were the exception, but, unhappily, it crowds upon a succession of financial mismanagement revelations involving several Catholic institutions in recent years. In 1974, there was the failure of the trust fund that cost the Diocese of Reno, the La Salette Fathers and other Catholic groups some $25 million, while raising questions whether Securities and Exchange Commission regulations had been respected. About the same time it became known that the Pauline Fathers were in financial straits resulting from the sale of bonds; subsequently they were hit with a court judgment involving $2.8 million in liens on their National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa in Doylestown, Pa. A few years earlier there were the bankruptcy adventures of the Salvatorian order, which found itself facing $8.6 million in debts after being defrauded by a Washington attorney, and the Houston Jesuits, who lost $6 million in a stock deal engineered by one Frank Sharp—appropriate name.



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These money cases, and others not chronicled here, are all quite different. In some the collusion or scheming for profit is not as blatant as in others. With a few, their troubles might be innocent, just sheer bad luck. Nevertheless, all have one thing in common. They dramatize the urgency of new and more responsible fiscal policies on the part of those institutions of religion that exist through the good will of the public. They can survive only by retaining the trust and confidence of those they appeal to. This trust and confidence, in turn, are contingent upon alms solicited being used in measure and means consistent with the fund-raising appeals and people's expectations. It is intolerable that these sums gathered for the hungry, the infirm, the destitute, should be turned to speculation or be diverted to enlarge the institution's capital and non-religious holdings. It is intolerable whether the action ends in financial disaster, as seems to have been the fate of the LaSalettes, or is wildly successful, as the Boys Town fund-raising operation was discovered to be a few years ago, when it was revealed that its net worth was about $209 million and rising by $17 million a year or more, after all expenses —not only more than Boys Town needed, but more than it could hope to spend for years to come.

Church officials have cracked down hard and publicly on the Baltimore mission of the Pallotine Fathers, from the local chancery through to Rome. Watchdogs of the public interest, such as the *Washington Post*, have responded with statements of relief and encouragement to officials to continue to act decisively on the matter.

But reform of fund-raising policies must go much further than putting the Pallotines' house in order. The Pallotine story is too familiar; it is, as earlier paragraphs point up, only part of a wider and distressful pattern of what amounts to institutional abuse and betrayal of those solicited, to say nothing of those in need. Much of this is possible because religious fund-raising institutions are largely free of governmental regulatory auditing, and because church authorities themselves have been lax about many of the whys and wherefores of fund-raising under religious auspices. We are not anxious to see government at any level step into the fund-raising procedures of religious institutions, except, of course, in breaches of civil law. On the other hand, church authorities can do much more to prevent the cloak of religion from being exploited by the very people of religion. For one thing, they could be much firmer in seeing that moneys raised are truly needed and used for the purposes for which they are solicited. At the same time, those orders and institutions going to the public can be much more open and candid than most have been in the past.

The *Washington Post* advises religious groups whose existence is directly tied to fund appeals to include in their solicitations detailed balance sheets so that potential contributors can make better judgments about the worthiness and effectiveness of those groups seeking their help. It is a good suggestion, and a policy that is routinely followed by reputable non-religious agencies that depend on fund-raising. Accountability, after all, is only a concomitant of solicitation.

The point is obvious. Misadventures such as that of the Pallotine Fathers do much more than hurt their order and their works, real and alleged. They plant an understandable cynicism in the minds of the public, and thus they erode confidence in the fiscal responsibility and legitimacy of other institutions of religion dependent upon fund appeals. The forceful handling of the Pallotine case is reassuring, but it is only the start of what needs to be done before cynicism is fully purged from religious fund-raising.

**FROM IRELAND**

## A BOOST FOR COSGRAVE

The standing of Mr. Liam Cosgrave, the Irish Republic's Prime Minister since February 1973, has never been so high at home or abroad. His firm refusal to negotiate with the two IRA break-away kidnappers of Dutch industrialist, Dr. Tiede Herrema, resulted in the eventual surrender of the kidnappers and the industrialist's safe return. But the kidnapping of Dr. Herrema, the managing director of the Ferenka plant in Limerick, brought international media publicity to Ireland and diplomatic pressure when at times the 'no surrender' attitude of the Dublin government appeared to be endangering the Dutchman's life.

In the end, however, police and army tactics of adopting a wait-and-see approach during the siege of a council house in Monasterevin, Co. Kildare, where the kidnappers—Eddie Gallagher and Marion Coyle—had taken the industrialist, proved to be correct. Victory for the Republic's armed forces meant a boost in their confidence as the image of both wings of the IRA reached an all-time low. The demoralization of the IRA was seen in the outbreak of a bloody squabble between the Provisional and Official wings—a dispute that was patched up to avoid utter disintegration of the Republican movement.

Throughout the kidnapping incident Mr. Cosgrove



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had maintained that his government would not bargain on the demands for a release of Republican prisoners, the English revolutionary aristocrat, Dr. Rose Dugdale (Gallagher's lover) and leading IRA hawk Kevin Mallon (Coyle's boyfriend). "We do not bargain at the point of a gun," was the Premier's constant reaction.

The release of Dr. Herrema was a vindication of the principle upheld by Mr. Cosgrave that a government has a moral duty not to yield to force exerted by kidnappers or guerrillas. His adherence to principle was soon rewarded when his Fine Gael Party, the senior partner in the government, won a crucial by-election in West Mayo against the Fianna Fail Party of Mr. Jack Lynch.

Had Fine Gael lost the by-election, the coalition government would have been left with a one-seat majority over a Fianna Fail party which has been reverting to the fundamentalist policy of its founder, Eamonn de Valera, of opposing the partition of Ireland into British-dominated North and independent South. The by-election result with its 6 percent swing in favor of Fine Gael proved that Mr. Lynch was becoming captive to the militant wing of his party, while Mr. Cosgrave's law and order approach corresponded with the mood of public opinion in the Republic. During the campaign Mr. Cosgrave had revealed that the Northern troubles had cost the Republic £250 million in lost tourism and foreign investment as well as £80 million in security bills. The by-election indicated that the Republic is in no mood for the pursuit of an irredentist policy.

The West Mayo victory meant that Mr. Cosgrave could go ahead with putting through the Dail (Parliament) a Criminal Law Jurisdiction Bill, similar to a Bill already approved by the Westminster Parliament in Britain. Both Bills will enable Irish and British courts to try persons accused of terrorist-type offenses committed in the other country, thus avoiding lengthy extradition proceedings.

Defeat in West Mayo could mean that Mr. Jack Lynch, who since 1969 as Prime Minister and then as Opposition leader has taken a moderate line on Northern Ireland, will be replaced as party chief by militant Republican, Charles Haughey. In recent months the Fianna Fail party has reversed its acceptance of bipartisan policy on the North and has called for a declaration of British withdrawal.

Fianna Fail's swing to a hard-line policy is considered by many Dublin commentators to be "singularly inappropriate," coming at a time when the Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention was submitting its report to Westminster on the form of a possible future government for the North.

Fianna Fail's anti-British posture is considered unfortunate as it is expected that Northern Ireland Secretary, Mr. Merlyn Rees, will hand the report back to the Convention for further consideration. If the report is returned, then the Social and Democratic Labor Party (SDLP) could reinvigorate its attempt to persuade the majority United Ulster Unionist Coalition to accept some form of power-sharing between the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland.

Green flag-waving from Fianna Fail in Dublin could be a provocation for Orange intransigence in Belfast. It is to be hoped Mr. Rees, Mr. Cosgrave and the Convention members can pursue a less flamboyant but more fruitful policy. Meanwhile, the Northern impasse remains.

JOHN COONEY

*(John Cooney, a member of the staff of the* Irish Times, *is* Commonweal*'s correspondent in Dublin.)*

## WASHINGTON REPORT

# POLITICS AND POLITICIANS

Politicians are in that category of persons whom we can't live with, but, in a representative democracy, we can't live without. Most of them, when they're good, they're very, very good; but when they're bad, they're horrid.

In the dismal 1950s and the public-relations 1960s, there were politicians in the Congress (all members of Congress are not politicians) who did their duty without fanfare. They didn't become household words, thereby. Newspapers and television preferred to publicize those given to strutting within the congressional chambers. Two, who didn't strut, but did well were Rep. Edith Green of Portland, Oregon, who fought for federal aid to education and fought against such abominations as the House Committee on Un-American Activities, although she soured in her last few years in the Congress, and Rep. Richard Bolling of Kansas City, Missouri, who publicly insisted that the congressional structure—e.g., committees and the procedure by which their members were appointed—needed an enema. He preferred to walk alone in ostracism, sacrificing personal advancement within the House of Representatives, rather than to soft-pedal in any way his prescription for reforms—some of which have been adopted.

The question, then, is not whether we need politicians. We do. We do, however, need more politicians practicing politics, in the words of an Englishman, as "an ancient and honorable adventure." An election year may seem



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to be the logical time to produce such politicians, but often this is not the case. The country can be falling down around our ears and a sitting President, in his State-of-the-Union Message, will seek to persuade us that everything's in pretty good shape.

This is why Americans are unhappy about their politicians and politics this year. A continued weak economy, an unprecedented corrupt presidency a few years ago, a ridiculous military misadventure in Indochina that cost 56,000 American dead and an unresolved racial question on the eve of our entrance into our Third Century, all these have been major factors in generating this unhappiness on the part of Americans.

Concretely, this is reflected in the declining percentage of registered Americans who are voting—only 40 percent of voting age Americans actually voted in the last congressional election. It is also reflected in a recent professional poll taken approximately six weeks before the Massachusetts primary. The largest percentage of support for a Democrat presidential candidate was 12 percent, while the largest individual percentage was that of "undecided"—42 percent. Former Georgia Governor Carter won the Iowa precinct caucus elections in late January with nearly 28 percent of the vote; but 37 percent of the elected delegates said they were uncommitted.

Americans' dissatisfaction about their typical politicians is also illustrated by the recent election of a new breed of political cat—only a few, but there may be many more to come. Two examples are governors—Brown of California, the most populous state, and Dukakis of Massachusetts. The press, conventional as it is, has difficulty describing the outlook and words of these governors, because they are considered unconventional. Yet the two governors daily illustrate what Emerson once ascribed as common American traits—"plain-dealing and common sense."

What is needed, asked Dukakis, at a recent national Democratic party issues convention in Louisville, Ky.? He answered his own question: "Quite simply, a clear and intelligent division of functions between the federal government on the one hand, and state and local governments on the other."

The federal government, Governor Dukakis said, should decide what only it can do well, while freeing state and local governments "to do what we do best without a maddening maze of federal forms, requirements and bureaucracy."

Of course, what the federal government can do well is not being done well—foreign policy is both corrupt and unfitting. The economy is in ill-health. Law-enforcement agencies have broken the law. The tax system suggests an adherence to a policy of socialism-for-the-rich and free enterprise-for-the-poor.

Governor Dukakis doesn't specifically say so in his speeches, but he suggests, as does Governor Brown in his addresses, that "a man can be a liberal without being a spendthrift." Who said that? Governor Alf Landon of Kansas, the Republican presidential nominee, in 1936, said that during his campaign against the incumbent President, Franklin Roosevelt.

Of course, the weakness in the Dukakis formula is an assumption that local and state governments would assume responsibility for carrying out programs allocated them under any "reorganization" of functions between the federal government and themselves. Self-government is not necessarily local government, which is why the federal government is running a lot of programs that even their managers concede would operate better if run by state and/or local governments. The latter—even under the duress of the 1930s Depression—simply declined for a variety of reasons to establish needed programs: aid-to-the-unemployed, effective health care for all, etc. So the "Feds" did.

The public, educated and otherwise, seems uncertain these days. President Ford recently sent the Congress a budget based on curtailing public spending. Normally, with approximately 8 percent unemployment nationally, this would be a major assist in defeating his campaign for nomination and election to the presidency. But this risk is diminished, temporarily at least, because of Americans' standoffishness toward both major political parties and the uncertainty as to what to do on the part of the Democrats themselves—beyond the criticism that President Ford isn't doing the correct things.

The politicians of both parties could both improve the caliber of their craft—and the welfare of the nation—by applying the words of Senator McGovern, who spoke at the same national conference in Louisville as Dukakis did. In a speech entitled "The Issue is Us," McGovern's first words were: "In certain places and times, political leaders must talk with the people of things which they might prefer to whisper only among themselves."

These are the "certain places and times."

SISYPHUS

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JOHN FANDEL

## *SCALING*

If, instead of trying this poem,
I were climbing the Matterhorn—
boots, parka, pack, ropes, clamps . . .
what it takes
to take a peak! I'll stay home
(to scale *that* rime), born
to risk Parnassus. Ramps
to cliffs, (a rime for *takes*?)
hanging on the Matter-
horn of poem.



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RAP' 76

# GOD, POLITICS AND LINCOLN'S PEW

From its inception—in a conversation between students at the Wesley Theological Seminary in October 1975—the conference on Religion and the Presidency (RAP '76) was in danger of turning out like a party where everybody was invited but nobody came.

At first it looked like a good idea: get 32 distinguished ecumenical co-sponsors—Martin Marty, Msgr. Jack Egan, Ira Silverman etc.; invite 500 "religious leaders" (500 is the seating capacity of Washington's New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, where Abraham Lincoln's own pew is still in place, second row on the right) to a forum with all the announced presidential candidates, for two hours each, and get their views on a set of questions—moral leadership, civil rights, welfare, economy, world hunger, education and foreign policy. It reminded me in a way of the semiannual intramural conferences we used to stage for our own community at the old Woodstock Seminary in the Maryland hills.

But RAP '76, perhaps unintentionally, sprang from certain assumptions about power, politics and religion in contemporary America: that organized religion really is a political-moral force; that the "500 religious leaders" who would respond to the mailing of 4000 invitations had power that the 11 candidates, approached four months ago when their schedules were still open for January 19-21, could not refuse to confront; that civil religion—that historical, invisible weave between theology and public life in the secular state—was still alive enough to generate good debate.

But these assumptions seem to have been wrong, and RAP '76 was caught in a *Catch-22* situation from the start. The candidates weren't going to show unless they either *liked* to talk about religion in public, felt some moral obligation to the people running the conference, or made a tactical judgment that two hours in the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church were worth more votes than a day in the snows of New Hampshire. Meanwhile the "religious leaders" weren't going to show if they were liable to end up talking to themselves.

The first candidate to refuse was President Gerald Ford. Some of the "heavies"—Birch Bayh, Jimmy Carter, Fred Harris and George Wallace—all made other commitments. Terry Sanford pulled out the first day, pleading doctor's orders. Henry Jackson, scheduled for the last night, begged off a few hours before he was to appear without giving any reasons. I can only surmise that a scout must have reported that if he came he would have been talking to a crowd of at most 75, including press, a few seminarians and his own secret service men.

That left Gene McCarthy, whose opening homiletic (in the good sense) position paper on the Christian in politics and whose designation of poverty, overconsumption and the relationship between defense and trust as the moral issues of the campaign, served as a keynote for the meeting but did little to convince his listeners he was a "serious" candidate. Plus Sargent Shriver, Milton Shapp, Lloyd Bentsen, Morris Udall—and Arthur Blessitt! Blessitt is a religious man who, if elected, would cut the president's salary to twice the income of the average family and would make unannounced visits to citizens' homes and stay overnight. I cannot help thinking that his presence on the program was a signal that the conference was in trouble.

I had come to the conference undecided on whom I could support for President, hoping that I could get some sense of the character of these relatively unknown men as they dealt with questions as intricate as disarmament and as intimate as their concept of God. Certainly not Gerald Ford whom I watched from the House press gallery as he delivered his State of the Union Address on Monday night, tacking on his "God bit" in the last 20 seconds—as if the mention of the Deity could give substance to so inadequate a document.

Not the elegant, silver-throated, hard-eyed Bentsen who came across as a Lyndon Johnson with poise and no heart. There seemed to be no one there—just a voice and a bland speech not far enough from Ford's, a string of "I'm for *X but* we must leave room for *Y*s." Perhaps the equally elegant Shriver, who has been unfairly classified as a lightweight, who *does* talk too much and can't stick to a point when he gets wound up (he turned a question on birth control research into a lecture on medical ethics, Karen Quinlan and cloning).

McCarthy had said the candidate he was closest to ideologically was Udall. More than the others, Udall spoke right to each point and captured the enthusiasm of the group. Unlike Shriver he said he would unilaterally limit our arms build-up as a moral example. Seldom have I seen a public man whose words so seemed to correspond to the feelings and convictions that sent them forth. Asked about his religious faith, he told the story about his Catholic friend who had been asked to describe his relationship to his church and replied, "critic." He answered that he treasured his youth in a Mormon family but that 30 years ago he had split with his church over its racial policies and had not been back. He had tried those Washington prayer breakfasts but just didn't seem to fit in. He now finds God in hikes to mountain tops. With civil religion in decline, there's nothing much more American than that.

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH



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# THE ACID TEST: THE C.I.A.

***PETER STEINFELS***

THERE IS much talk of the United States as the "liberty party" in the world. On the face of it, such talk is welcome, if only because it could become a self-fulfilling prophecy. We know how attaching a label may set in motion expectations which, for better or worse, finish by shaping reality to the description. Imagining America the "liberty party" may thus have happier consequences than the apparent agreement, several years ago, between both critics and defenders of the international status quo that the concept most appropriate for analyzing our role in the world was "empire."

Nevertheless, it is not hard to detect a clank in this "alarm for liberty," as Ambassador Moynihan called it in the Bicentennial issue of *The Public Interest*, a rusty reminiscence of that nineteenth-century upper-class liberalism which made "liberty" the watchword against extension of the franchise and economic protection for the great mass of citizens. The new celebrants of liberty, like their nineteenth-century predecessors, are apt to pit liberty against equality and even against democracy; and since their voices have hardly been heard in opposition to the various assaults on liberty committed or attempted in the United States—the danger that a black or a woman might have an unfair advantage in being hired for an assistant professorship has generally exhausted their capacity for outrage—it is not impossible, indeed it appears likely, that their attachment to liberty is only a rhetorically acceptable way of mounting their fear of equality and democracy.

Although the real target of this debate about liberty, equality and democracy is, I believe, the domestic politics of the United States, public awareness of the discussion has been directed largely toward the sphere of international affairs. There, we can compare ourselves not with the exacting standards of our Founding Fathers but with the shameful and often ludicrous crimes of petty dictators. In that arena, those who feel that a round of self-congratulation will be morally bracing can easily find grounds for what they think we need. Still, there remains that embarrassing gap between the new rhetoric and the reality of U.S. actions, a gap which opened like a trapdoor beneath Ambassador Moynihan when his U.N. resolution on political prisoners was promptly followed by a State Department refusal to provide Congress with a legally required list of U.S.-supported nations engaged in "gross violations" of human rights. Such abuses are all too common, said the State Department, among nations we aid militarily as well as those we don't. The "liberty party" may be okay for Turtle Bay; evidently they have more serious business to attend to in Foggy Bottom.

Whether the advocates of the "liberty party" thesis are sincere or merely wordsmiths of a new ideology is about to be tested by another concrete issue—control over the C.I.A. and other intelligence agencies.

The arguments for and against covert activities in general and the numerous forms of subversion, corruption, assassination, warfare, and terror carried out by the CIA in particular are now being rehearsed in Congress and the press. The extent of the problem is amazing. Were the C.I.A. and its intelligence allies an independent nation, their annual expenditures of $10.5 billion would make them the thirty-fourth largest nation in Gross National Product, ranking ahead of Egypt, Greece, Chile and Israel.

And often enough it seems as though the C.I.A. is an independent nation, a nation within a nation, at most sharing with the rest of America only the rule of the presidency or the direction of a non-elected official like Kissinger.

The secrecy of the C.I.A. has by and large not been wielded against our real or imagined enemies—the C.I.A. has often known and usually prudently assumed that the "adversary" understood what was going on—as much as against the American people. Animated by an elitist philosophy of "knowing best," the C.I.A. has been shaped into an instrument designed not so much to escape detection on the world scene as to escape scrutiny and accountability at home.

The proposals to remedy this development are many, and each should be debated on its merits. What is crucial is the question of control, bringing the intelligence arms under the Constitutional system of checks and balances toward which we protest allegiance and admiration.

There is an opposing theory arguing that only a C.I.A. which is not "hamstrung" stands between surrender and nuclear confrontation. This seems to be an article of faith on the part of many, apparently standing in no need for empirical evidence. But that dogma aside, it is unquestionable that certain inconveniences, at least to the parties in power, attach to democratic control and debate of foreign policies now carried out in secret.

This, of course, is where the "case for liberty" must be made. It is precisely because of the inconveniences of freedom and democracy that so many of the world's rulers have eliminated free and representative government (and not infrequently, it should be mentioned, with the assistance of the C.I.A.). To argue

*(Continued on page 127)*



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# THE REAL WELFARE CHISELERS

AL SHEAHEN

## Able-bodied but lazy loafers who drive Cadillacs?

Which is worse? A welfare chiseler, or a rich man who uses legal loopholes to pay little or no taxes? In a recent Lou Harris poll, 58 percent felt the rich man was worse. 28 percent voted for the welfare chiseler.

The vote was surprising, since millions of sincere Americans still seem to believe that the welfare system is loaded with able-bodied but lazy loafers who get rich and drive Cadillacs while the rest of us work and pay taxes to support them.

Richard Nixon once requested the song "Welfare Cadillac" at a formal White House event:

"We get peanut butter and cheese and, man,
They give us flour by the sack.
'Course them welfare checks, they meet
The payments on this new Cadillac."

The 1971 Grammy-award winning country and western song, "When You're Hot, You're Hot" has the lyric:

"I gotta go down and pick up my welfare check.
So I can make the payment on my Cadillac."

A Texas University survey found that 84 percent of people believe "too many people who should be working are on welfare." The idea of welfare recipients driving around in Cadillacs is a peculiar myth, but obviously a popular one. The truth is that the average monthly payment to a welfare recipient is only $65.52. Twenty-four million Americans still live in the depths of poverty in the richest nation in the history of the world.

Only half of America's poor receive any welfare at all. For those who do, welfare payments can be described as guaranteed annual poverty. Welfare is the "good life" only to those who have never experienced trying to live on 18-cent lunches.

Yet the "welfare chiseler" has become a kind of "folk-villain" in America today. While the traditional American folk-hero has been the self-made, rags-to-riches man, as deeply ingrained into the American system is the belief in a folk-villain, the self-made poor man, lazy, immoral and irresponsible.

The work ethic is one reason why. Teamster official Nicholas Kisburg says "one reason why blue-collar guys hate welfare so much is that they feel, psychologically, that it threatens them. Working, bringing home the check each week, is one way of establishing their supremacy, to themselves and their families. Work is the one thing they have. When they see a guy getting a check for doing nothing, they go crazy."

Another reason is guilt. Years ago the American people really didn't know the extent of poverty in this country. Now we know, but we don't seem to be able to do anything about it. And that bothers us.

Melvin Lerner, in *Psychology Today,* writes: "If we can help a victim, we are inclined to do so. But God help the victim if we can't—we're likely to decide that he richly deserves everything that is happening to him."

In a series of experiments, Lerner found that most people get emotionally upset whenever they see innocent suffering, and any sense of responsibility for the suffering increases our pain. Most people are not indifferent to the suffering of others. In fact, just the reverse is probably true—we are extremely vulnerable to the suffering of others.

"But," says Lerner, "we feel miserable and under

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AL SHEAHEN, *a specialist in welfare reform, has published articles dealing with various social and economic problems in national magazines and newspapers.*



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stress when the hero—the good person—suffers. Yet we are indifferent or even pleased when the villain finally gets his just desserts. We all have a need to believe that our world is just . . . that the good are rewarded and the bad are punished. We care deeply about justice for ourselves and others. This need to see justice done causes us unbearable stress if the victim is beyond help, or if the person inflicting the suffering is too powerful to resist."

Dr. Bruno Bettelheim noticed this process in the way many Germans living under the Nazis first reacted to the concentration camps. If the people seized by the Nazi police and put into camps were truly innocent, as they appeared to be, then their government was extremely unjust. This conclusion was too frightening for most Germans to accept, in spite of what they saw directly. They wanted to believe that they lived in a world governed by law and order.

To maintain their sense of justice, if not their sanity, Germans convinced themselves that those who were sent to the concentration camps must have really deserved their fate. They were criminals of some kind and the government was merely protecting all good Germans from this criminal element. The average German citizen could then go about his daily life secure in the belief that his government, his world, was just.

To some degree, the same process is at work in America today. Most Americans believe the poor are themselves responsible for their plight and society is not to blame. We have convinced ourselves that the typical welfare recipient is dishonest, lazy, untrustworthy. We are thus able to live with the fact that millions of our fellow Americans are living and, indeed, dying in squalor. We can tell ourselves that they deserve what they're getting.

### *Behind the Myth*

The facts, of course, are different.

A government investigation of fraud determined that 0.4 percent—4 out of every 1,000—of all welfare cases were fraudulent. Another government survey showed that only 0.7 percent of welfare recipients were even suspected of cheating, and that only 0.06 percent—6 out of every 10,000—were ever prosecuted by law enforcement agencies. Government surveys also show that less than one percent of welfare recipients are able-bodied, unemployed males. Most beneficiaries are children, the aged, the disabled and mothers. But a lot of people are unaware of, or don't want to believe, the figures. So the myth of the "welfare chiseler" persists.

It's not only psychological. It's orchestrated at the highest levels of government. One of the oldest, yet most effective, political tricks is to blame a country's problems on one segment of the population; to find a sacrificial lamb; to direct the anger of the many against a few, so as to divert people's attention from the real problems. Hitler did it in the 1930s against the Jews. To a lesser degree, the U.S. government has done it with the poor. They're the most vulnerable. They have no money . . . no prestige . . . no political clout. So it's become the old story of turning one group—the taxpayers—against another group—the poor; the workingman against the downtrodden.

How is this done? How do you manipulate people to believe that welfare fraud is rampant when, in fact, it is 0.4 percent? It's not difficult.

If you're then-President Richard Nixon, you go on national television and you tell the American people: "The thing that is demeaning is for a man to refuse work and then ask someone else who works to pay taxes to keep him on welfare." (Applause)

If you're the State Welfare Director of Nevada, you make the front page by charging that: "50% OF WELFARE RECIPIENTS CAUGHT CHEATING." Later you are found to be "running roughshod over the rights of welfare recipients" and your charges totally unfounded by the Federal District Court in Las Vegas. But the truth never quite catches up with the headline.

If you run a San Diego newspaper, you devote a 5-column, 50-inch story to then-Governor of California Ronald Reagan's blast at rising welfare costs, while in the same issue, you put the latest poverty figures on an inside page in a two-inch story.

If you run the *Los Angeles Times*, you headline: "WELFARE COSTS SKYROCKET," citing the annual welfare cost rise to $16.3 billion. But a few days later you virtually ignore the U.S. Senate's voting of $21 billion for military procurements. You bury the story on the inside pages. Then when the government announces its latest survey showing that welfare fraud is less than 1 percent, you ignore the story completely. You don't even print it.

So it's not difficult to see how the public is regularly deluded into believing that welfare costs and welfare chiselers are the cause of rising taxes, and that the poor of America are richly getting what they deserve. The truth is that since the total annual welfare costs—federal, state and local combined—are $16.3 billion, and the fraud rate is 0.4 percent, we can calculate that welfare fraud costs the U.S. $65 million annually, or $1.03 per family per year, or two cents a week.

By comparison, farm subsidies cost the U.S. $4.2 billion a year, or $66 per family. Oil import quotas cost Americans $7.2 billion a year, or $114 per family. The national interest on government debt, mostly war-created, will cost $24.7 billion in 1974, or $389 out of the pocket of the average American taxpaying family. Defense spending will cost each family $1,230 this



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year. Defense cost overruns in the past few years cost each of us $527. Tax loopholes are plugged by the rest of us to the tune of $907 per year.

Welfare fraud is a tiny fraction of the massive, calculated chiseling which goes on daily in this country. Politicians who angle for headlines and votes by blaming "welfare chiselers" for rising taxes are lying and they know they are lying. They know there is a thousand times more chiseling and sheer waste in government and business than in the entire welfare program. They know that this country could easily provide a guaranteed adequate income to all the people simply by cutting the defense budget by only 25 percent, or by closing a third of the tax loopholes.

For us to worry about some poor guy on welfare, who can't make it through life, chiseling us out of a few nickels and dimes, seems ludicrous. Given the temptation, given that a few dollars more or less welfare money may be a matter of survival, the prevailing honesty of welfare recipients—their fidelity to the rules of the very system which keeps them poor—is, to say the least, remarkable.

## 'What I think about the Roman Catholic Church'

*Fifth in a Series*

# THE CATHOLIC CRISIS

GEORGE A. LINDBECK

In what now seems the distant past before the Council ended, I published an article suggesting that the relationship of Catholic and Protestant is rather like that between an occupied country and exiled freedom movements. In this case, however, the freedom forces have forgotten that the reason for their existence is to return to their homeland, a liberated homeland. Instead, they have tried to re-establish their native country abroad, alienated from the depths and continuities of culture and tradition from which they sprang.

This is not a modest view. It is no more modest, though I hope more self-critical, than De Gaulle's attitude towards Vichy France. Nevertheless, as could be expected, a good many of my fellow Protestants thought that it manifested an inordinate lack of self-esteem. They did not, and do not, like to think of Catholicism as having anything which we lack. As a group, we Protestant theologians have little feel for what Paul Tillich called "catholic substance." We tend to talk as if all that is needed is the "protestant principle" with its anti-absolutism, anti-traditionalism, inconoclasm, secularism and liberationism. We are inclined to forget that this principle is essentially a corrective which becomes destructive rather than purifying when it has nothing substantial on which to act.

Given this starting point, a Protestant like myself can't help but be ambivalent about the last ten years of Roman Catholic history. My instinctive sympathies are with Catholic reformers like Hans Küng for whom the chief villains in the present turmoil are the church authorities. They could have saved the church from crisis if only they had not been gradualists or reactionaries. Very little is wrong that would not have been cured by jettisoning ancient rigidities on such matters as birth control and clerical celibacy. "It is best not," Küng concludes one essay, "to flip an omelette step by step," and "One has to jump a stream if one wants to avoid getting wet feet." (*Diskussion um Hans Küng "Die Kirche,"* eds. H. Häring & J. Nolte, Freiburg: Herder, 1971, pp. 302-303.) Now, as an heir of the Reformation, my natural inclination is to want the bishops and pope to do even more than Hans Küng asks, but I am increasingly skeptical that this would diminish the crisis.

Almost against my will, I find myself in part persuaded by such "romantic conservatives" (I don't know what else to call them) as James Hitchcock and Garry Wills. It seems to me, as it does to them, that many of those who claim the progressive name have misused the Council as a cloak for innovative ego-tripping. They have appealed to the Council to justify their own loss of faith, their mindless capitulation to *modernitas*, their devious and unacknowledged departures from what is essential, not only to the Roman tradition, but to Christianity itself. Even the more responsible among them, even the Council fathers, have done great damage, even if unintentionally. In their search for contemporary relevance or for Christian faithfulness, they have undermined that popular, traditional, cultural Catholicism which, however, oppres-

GEORGE A. LINDBECK, *Lutheran theologian and member of the faculty of the Yale Divinity School, served as a Protestant observer at the Second Vatican Council.*



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sive and obscurantist it may seem to the upwardly mobile, the educated elite and the biblical purists, is still the source of meaning and life to multitudes.

The Catholic ghetto provided the masses with group and individual identity, a sense of community, the dignity of belonging someplace amidst the anonymity of post-industrial civilization. It gave them access to glimpses of transcendence, apprehensions of the sacred, awareness of ultimate significance. Perhaps their lives were bedeviled with primitive taboos and superstitions, but the terror and beauty of the primitive are vastly preferable to the flat, moralistic reasonableness of liberal religion, or the mechanical triviality, superficiality and sensuality of commercialized American secularism. Thus in attacking traditionalism, the *avant garde* has often proved to be, not the proponent of Christian renewal, but simply the accomplice of contemporary Western liberalism and its elitist adherents.

### *Common Malaise*

When looked at in this way, the Catholic crisis appears, not as an isolated phenomenon, but as an acute form of a malaise common to all the historic Christian traditions. That, indeed, is my reason as a Protestant for being concerned about it. The Catholic problem is also a non-Catholic problem. The strength also of Protestant churches rests on particular forms of traditional cultural Christianity. They also are in need of both updating and of a return to the sources, of greater relevance and greater faithfulness to revelation, of *modernitas* and *Christianitas*. Otherwise the traditions will continue to decline, increasingly unable to serve either the human needs of their members and of the larger society, or the imperatives of Christian faith.

Yet the difficulties are immense. Most of the Christian faith and vitality which persists is deeply embedded in ever more archaic traditional forms. Nine-tenths of the church members in America whether Protestant or Catholic are, in Gordon Allport's terminology, "extrinsically religious." They use their religion chiefly as a security blanket, a legitimation and support for the way they already live, for the so-called values of an often reactionary version of the American Way of Life. As a result they are more prejudiced against blacks and Jews than the majority of non-churchgoers. Yet there is also a minority of men and women who are intrinsically religious, largely consisting, so the sociologists surprisingly report, of those who go to church and pray and read scripture most often. For them, substantially more frequently than for the mass of church members, religion is an often uncomfortable transforming power, freeing them in statistically reportable ways from the standard prejudices of their milieu.

There are, to be sure, innumerable exceptions. The ranks of the pious contain the worst hypocrites—viz., the self-deceived ones—as well as men and women of faith. What we need to remember is that the latter have, in most cases, personally interiorized the faith, not apart from their traditions, but in and through them. They have developed their transforming loyalty to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ *via* some specific traditional interpretation of the Christian story, whether Catholic or Protestant, not by unmediated leaps into transcendence or into mystical or romantic interiority, nor even by jumping directly back to the Bible. Therein lies the problem. The destruction of these traditions, whether of fundamentalist revivalism or of Marian devotion, whether by modernization or by insistence on chemically pure Christianity, is also the destruction of the seedbeds of most of the genuine Christian vitality and authentic Christian faith which still lives in our world. To paraphrase what Luther said about the Bible, traditional religion, though often extrinsic and perverted, is the cradle of Christ.

This, then, is the perspective from which my thinking about Catholicism starts. I think first of the people, the religion of the masses, for that is where the strength of any church lies. As long as they retain a strong sense of Catholic identity, institutional and theological collapse can be survived without mortal damage.

Now it seems that the erosion of traditional piety is proceeding faster in American Catholic than in Protestant circles. Its sociological base in the immigrant subcultures is disappearing as Catholics move upwards and outwards in the social, economic and educational spheres. The devotional practices which were its emotional-experiential core have swiftly disappeared or been downgraded since the Council. Younger Catholics even from devout traditional backgrounds know little or nothing of the novenas, benedictions, recitations of the rosary and cults of the saints which were the major affective components in their parents' religion. The reformed liturgy does not seem to serve as an adequate substitute, in part, as Aidan Kavanaugh and many others have said, because it is in its essential structure a celebration of the intimate communion of believers with Christ and with one another, and simply does not fit in large parish settings. Thus, like the old mass, the new liturgy is for most Catholics a duty rather than an experience; and now the Counter-Reformation sense of discipline is itself weakening.

Thus, articulated convictions seem to be draining out of popular Catholicism much as they have out of liberal Protestantism, and this is rather more dangerous for the Catholics because they have no remaining, coherently organized mass of traditionalists to recruit from as liberal Protestant denominations have recruited and may expect to continue to recruit from conservative ones.

It is this which makes the institutional crisis, the crisis of authority, so agonizing. I find myself worrying about this crisis precisely because of its effects on the people.



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They are without a shepherd. Catholic consensus-building mechanisms are in greater disarray than in most other churches.

Current Catholic difficulties involve a special problem of legitimacy. It is true that all institutions are under attack these days, but what has happened in Roman Catholicism is that the church authorities have unwittingly delegitimized themselves. This has happened in a rather precise, almost juridically precise way. What might be called a constitutional crisis has erupted. There are radical and fundamental ambiguities in the most authoritative of recent formulations, those of the Second Vatican Council. Comparable equivocity would be a recipe for disaster in any large and highly organized society. When the supreme law of the land directly authorizes rival, perhaps contradictory, positions and provides no way of settling the disputes, conflict becomes inevitable and, unless changes are made in the supreme law, irresolvable.

The ambiguities which I have in mind can be easily illustrated. Principles were laid down by Vatican II

which theologically justify sweeping reforms in the structures, procedures and goals of the church. At the same time that these revolutionary principles were enunciated, however, the old formulations were also repeated. What the First Vatican Council said a hundred years ago about the papacy, for example, were simply reiterated, inserted without modification or re-interpretation in what is a radically different vision of both church and world. Similarly, individualistic other-worldliness is juxtaposed rather than joined with a cosmic and communal eschatology which makes the humanization of social and cultural structures a primary Christian duty. Thus Biblicists, modernizers, traditionalists and papalists can all appeal quite consistently to this or that aspect of the Council's teaching, and can argue that the features they choose as primary provide the hermeneutical key for the interpretation of the whole. The Berrigans and their supporters can point to the conciliar social and political interpretations of the commandment of Christian love as authorization for their opposition to Vietnam, while their opponents can argue that tradition forbids, and the Council never specifically approves, the kind of civil disobedience in which the Berrigans engage. Hans Küng can insist that the Council's emphasis on the Bible demands a thorough review of the doctrine of infallibility, while his critics reply that the biblical emphasis must be understood in the light of tradition, especially the tradition of Vatican I, rather than the other way around. There is no publicly persuasive way of showing who is the faithful Catholic, simply because the Council is equivocal on these and a whole range of other questions.

At the time of the Council, most of us who were observers thought of these equivocations as politically necessary, but of no great practical moment. The ambiguities would give the pope and bishops greater freedom in interpreting and implementing the conciliar decrees, but the Catholic clergy, religious and faithful would remain obedient. We could not have been more mistaken. Many in the lower ranks remained obedient, perhaps, but not so much to the current directives of the church leaders as to what they regard as even more authoritative, viz. the spirit and the letter of the Council.

As a consequence, non-Catholic church leaders, oddly enough, are now less likely to be attacked than Catholic ones. Their authority is more clearly legitimated. The Eastern Orthodox, when challenged, can take refuge in tradition, and the Protestants in past or future general conventions. "If you don't like what we do," they can generally say, "then get the next assembly to vote on your side." The Roman Catholic hierarchy has no such recourse. It still has, of course, tremendous power. It controls appointments and the purse, makes and unmakes rules and determines policy. But illegitimate power is perceived as tyranny, and at point after point the bishops can't help but act tyrannically because they contradict what many in the church sincerely believe to be the import of the Council.

The difficulty, to repeat, cannot be resolved. A pope who agreed theologically with Hans Küng, for example, might well have every whit as difficult a time as Paul VI, except that now the opposition would shift. People like Bill Buckley make it clear that conservatives also are able to refer to council, church, tradition and even the Bible against the pope or bishops whenever it suits their purposes.

If this general view of what is happening has any validity, then the crisis cannot be solved, not even by a new pope, but only lived through. Another council will in all likelihood eventually settle the constitutional question, i.e., the question of how to interpret Vatican II, just as the Council of Constantinople quieted the storms raised by Nicea, and Chalcedon by Ephesus. This settlement, however, cannot be rushed. It would be disastrous to try in the near future to remove the ambiguities of Vatican II. A basic consensus ranging from the people through the clergy and theologians to the bishops has not yet been forged. When it is, perhaps Catholics will have come to think that the solution of their constitutional crisis is inseparable from the ques-



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tion of Chritian unity. They may have come to believe, for example, that the full symbolic, even if not canonical, ecumenicity of a council requires the participation of all interested Christian bodies, not just of the Roman communion. If so, perhaps decades will pass before the basic institutional problem is finally resolved.

### *The Future*

This is an appalling prospect, yet it does not, in my view, justify the predictions of a Malachi Martin, for example, that the Roman Church as we have known it will disappear before the end of the century. No church, not even the Roman, is fundamentally its hierarchy. Even total institutional collapse on the highest levels is likely to be transitory. For the foreseeable future, there will be millions and millions of people throughout the world who take pride in thinking of themselves as Catholic Christians as did their fathers and fathers' fathers back, in some cases, to the sixtieth generation. If a great schism were to occur, as happened in the middle ages, they would be most unhappy. A precious part of their identity would be threatened. They would have difficulty in thinking of themselves as Catholic because there would no longer be an agreed-upon successor to the bishops of Rome with whom they could be in visible communion, along with Asians and Africans and Europeans. This would generate an enormous and lasting popular pressure on the leaders—who would be leaders of nothing without the people—to settle the disputes. Eventually, in all likelihood, there would be another council like that of Constance in the 15th century, and the schism would be healed. This is simple elementary social psychology. It is also, I would suppose, elementary Catholic theology, now that the Council has made clear that the church is, first of all, not the institution of salvation, but the people of God. The Roman Church does not endure first of all because of the papacy, but the papacy endures because its symbolization of universality and continuity exerts a powerful attraction on the imagination and emotions, wills and minds, of multitudes of human beings.

Further, in long-range terms, it seems to me possible to be moderately optimistic about popular piety also. Given a generation or two, the liturgical reforms may well be the source of a renewed and far more biblical spirituality. It took that long or longer, in some regions, so historians tell us, for the Reformation's changes in worship to shape a new piety among the people. Especially in view of the structural intimacy of the new liturgy, this will be the more likely to occur to the degree that the church declines in numbers and becomes a diaspora, a scattered minority, in the world.

As we come now to the end of this analysis, I am acutely aware of a great gap. Crisis spells, not only threat, but opportunity. I have said scarcely anything of the immense vitality and creativity of contemporary Catholicism. I have said not a word about what Archbishop Camara represents in Brazil, nor about the exhilarating conflict in Spain, nor the depressing one in Holland, nor about developments in Africa—to mention just four points which may prove decisive to world Catholicism and therefore also for the United States. The major excitement in the church these days is on the Catholic, not the Protestant side. Nothing in the non-Catholic world remotely compares in tragedy and comedy, both high and low, to the scene sketched in last spring's *Time* magazine cover story on the Jesuits. A half-filled Catholic seminary is in my experience often much more lively, as well as chaotic and frustrating, than a full Protestant one. This liveliness is both pastoral and theological, extending both to the struggle for the personal reality of faith and for its intellectual formulation and understanding. Catholics at this moment in history may rarely feel this way, but my impression is that the future of Christianity as a whole, to the degree that it has a future, is now bursting forth in a thousand often absurdly unexpected forms within the Roman Church. Most of the innovations will and should perish, but some contain the seeds of what is to come. The losses and confusion are great, but so is the hope.

PETER E. MURPHY

## ECLIPSE

I am looking at the moon.
It is a half moon
hazy
and very amber.
Unlike the songs
it doesn't do anything—
no dancing with the stars
or turning into gold
it doesn't spread green rumors
about itself.

It just hangs there
ignoring the equinox
forgetting its meteorites
and missing rock specimens.
The fact
that I am driving
over

the Throgs Neck Bridge
doesn't move it at all,
Even when I am tided
into the fog, which swallows my sight
and I am wrapped up in it.



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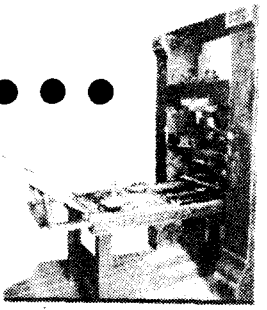
**NIXON'S REVENGE?**

# PRESS



General Maxwell Taylor is an intelligent, articulate, well-educated man. He once quoted Polybius before a congressional committee. General Taylor is also an experienced man, a veteran of many wars and a valued advisor to at least two Presidents. His concern with American policy in Vietnam lasted longer than that of any other American military man, beginning with Korea and not officially ending until Lyndon Johnson left office in 1969. Naturally our failure in Vietnam was painful to him but he did not try to avoid its hard lessons in his autobiography, *Swords and Ploughshares.* No. He confronted them directly, and reluctantly drew a painful conclusion:

> Unless we can learn to exercise some degree of self-discipline, to accept and enforce some reasonable standard of responsible civic conduct, and to remove the many self-created obstacles to the use of our power, we will be unable to meet the hard competition waiting for us in the decade of the 1970s.

I haven't asked him but I expect General Taylor thinks the bill to revise, reform and codify Title 18 of the United States Code, known as Senate One, is just what the doctor ordered.

S.1 has already been widely attacked as "Nixon's revenge" because its most objectionable sections were largely written by his Justice Department, and because it would offer civil servants charged with misconduct (breaking into the office of Ellsberg's psychiatrist, for example) a Nuremberg or "just following orders" defense. Blaming it all on Nixon, however, misses the point. The repressive sections of the bill—and they are very repressive—are not just grudge laws intended to get even with Nixon's enemies. Their purpose is more fundamental, to strengthen the autonomy of Presidents, and as such they probably would have been eagerly (if quietly and discreetly) welcomed by every President since. . . . It is hard to know whose name to put here. Has there ever been a President who did not feel that his opponents were willful or self-seeking, that a chief executive needed freedom to act, that the exigencies of the age did justify—nay, demand! —a willingness to ignore democratic niceties in order to achieve a greater good? Perhaps Coolidge was such a man, or Harding. or Chester A. Arthur. There cannot have been many. S.1 would have eased the way of the rest.

This was not its original purpose. The bill began as the report of a special commission appointed by Johnson back in 1966 to bring order to the chaos which was then (and for that matter still is) federal criminal law. The idea was to cull all criminal offenses from the 50 titles (i.e., volumes) of the U.S. Code and to collect them in one place. S.1 would, in fact, do this, but along the way it was rewritten by Attorney Generals Mitchell and Kleindienst and by Senate conservatives like John McClellan. If the repressive sections of the bill have a guiding political philosophy it is that civil liberties are fine, so long as they don't prevent a President from doing what he wants to do. But too often, sadly, civil liberties hinder the strong action which the times demand, hamstringing the chief executive. Democracy can be (and, especially during the lamentable Vietnam years, has been) taken too far. More in sorrow than in anger, then, S.1 would:

—Broaden the government's right to tap phones without a court order when "an emergency situation exists with respect to conspiratorial activities threatening the national security. . ." (Section 3104). This clearly includes Martin Luther King, Jane Fonda and Ramsey Clark. (Clark, remember, *went to Hanoi.*)

—Prohibit political activity which "could facilitate" the forcible overthrow of the government. (Section 1103.) "Could" is an infinitely elastic word.

—Give the government the power to ban (with the threat of prosecution) almost any demonstration on the grounds that it physically "interfered" with federal government functions. (Section 1302.) Demonstrations in the Mojave Desert would be permissible.

—Treat as sabotage any act which might, or might be intended to, "interfere with or obstruct the ability of the U.S. or an associate nation to prepare for or engage in war or defense activities." (Section 1111.)

These are all bad enough, but even worse are the sections which deal with information. In a recent editorial *TV Guide* wondered if the Church committee hadn't gone too far: "The public should know how our armed government operates, but must we know *everything* about *everything?*" S.1's answer is no.

Section 1121 would subject to charges of espionage anyone who, "knowing that national defense information could be used to the prejudice of the safety or interest of the United States or to the advantage of a foreign power, communicates such information to a foreign power." Section 1122, an anti-leaking law, prohibits disclosure of "national defense information" to anyone not "authorized" to receive it. Section 1123 requires anyone with such unauthorized information to return it forthwith to the government. Section 1114 prohibits the "communication" of "false statements" about the military affairs of the United States, its allies, or even its enemies.

Taken together, these sections amount to an Official



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Secrets Act, something first proposed (and defeated) in this country in 1917. Their intent ought to be clear: it is to prevent officials at any level of government from talking freely to reporters, and to prevent reporters from printing what they might learn anyway. They go far beyond present espionage laws, which define spying as the passage of secret defense information (tactical plans, technical details of weapons systems, diplomatic codes and the like) to a hostile foreign power. "Classified" documents—of which there are literally millions, on every subject from the sexual habits of Idi Amin, to the names of U.S. firms boycotting Israel—are classified by executive order only. An official who reveals them can be reprimanded or fired, but not prosecuted. A reporter who obtains them can print them or not, as he chooses. An Official Secrets Act—and S.1 has the substance if not the name—would give the government nearly total control over the dissemination and even the publication of information about what it is up to.

In writing about questions which deal with fundamental freedoms it is always tempting to exaggerate, to imply that if such and such happens the light of freedom will gutter out, and the long night of slavery begin. Well, bad as S.1 is, it's not that bad. It won't freeze all political activity in this country, and it won't even stop men of conscience from protesting wars they feel wrong. What it will do is this: for the first time it will give the government broad and effective control over what the public knows. If inconvenient facts in certain categories should appear in print, S.1 would allow the government to use all the tools of legal inquiry—grand juries, compulsory testimony, the threat of prosecution—to pin down the source of information. It will then allow the government to put the leakers in jail, right next to the reporter to whom he talked, and perhaps his publisher as well. I like and admire reporters but all the same I do not think the government would have to fill the jails to make S.1 work as intended. One or two cells ought to do the trick. If such a law had been in effect since 1965, what would we have known about the CIA's secret army in Laos, American involvement in the overthrow of Diem, the secret bombing of Cambodia, drug addiction in the U.S. Army, the cost of the C-5A, the overthrow of Allende, Westmoreland's request for another 206,000 men, or Watergate? The list could be extended indefinitely, and the answer in each instance is: not much.

In discussions of this sort it is customary to quote Justice Louis D. Brandeis, who wrote, "The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding." This remark has a nice ring to it. "Insidious" is a strong, evocative word, and "encroachment" is another. The final clause is charitable in the traditional American way, putting the best construction on things, granting an opponent the integrity of perfect sincerity, by suggesting he is stupid rather than malevolent.

The trouble with this traditional attitude is that the proponents of S.1 are not well-meaning. Our differences are not over the right way to achieve a common goal, but over the goal itself. S.1 sponsors have given up trying to make the world safe for democracy, and are trying to make democracy safe for the President. Their purpose is not a narrow one, aimed at immediate self-benefit. They can't read the future any more than you or I; they don't know who's going to be President in 1977, or in any other year. They don't care. Whoever he is, they want him to be strong, to be free to do as he likes without hindrance by underlings or journalists with contrary ideas. I assume the S.1 people don't want any more Vietnams, but if they should get one anyway they want to be damned sure there will be no more gloomy David Halberstams out in the field with the Army, no more Daniel Ellsbergs Xeroxing late into the night, no more Dr. Spocks blocking draft boards, no more oceans of demonstrators in Lafayette Park. Like General Taylor, they want a disciplined democracy in which Presidents will be able to ignore or jail dissidents at home, and do as they like with opponents abroad. I suppose, like Taylor, they blame Vietnam on our own "weakness," rather than credit the enemy's strength, and conclude that acquiescence here would


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have meant victory there. Had I but world enough and time, and your indulgence, I might explain why this isn't so. But in any event it doesn't really matter. The justification of democracy is not that it always *works* better (although I think it does, in accordance with the settled principle that two heads are better than one), but that it *is* better. Democracy assumes that the value of life is intrinsic rather than extrinsic; our purpose is to know ourselves, not to master the manual of arms, or to build a trans-Asian highway with American tollhouses at either end. But why am I telling you this? You know what democracy is, and presumably the proponents of S.1 do, too, or they could not know so well where it lies, and how to attack it.

It seems to me that an illusion lures them on, the illusion of unobstructed strength. Somewhere in every soldier, I think, is the dream that he will find his enemy out in the open, massed and vulnerable, just as boxers dream of the punches they might throw if only an opponent would drop his guard, and just as writers dream of the work they could do if only . . . if only the children would go out and play, or if the phone would stop ringing, or if they had an extra day for rewriting, or if they didn't have to worry about money.

Politicians are no less subject to the cussedness of things—self-seeking opponents, willful bureaucrats, side issues which devour their time and energy, associates who miss the point, the fickleness of the public, the clamor of the press. As they drift off to sleep at night they must dream of the history they could write if only they were free to *act*. . .

The purpose of S.1 is to give Presidents at least a measure of just this sort of freedom. The echoes of Vietnam are so audible within the bill that it almost seems intended for a rematch. It would ensure that the next time the bombing will go on, because no one will know about it; that Westmoreland will get his 200,000 troops, because the public won't find out he's asked for them until the decision has been made; that "our" allies in Angola will get whatever the President chooses to give them; that there will be no more embarrassing leaks about the CIA sparking awkward investigations. S.1 assumes that political ignorance means political docility, and that assumption is probably correct. But is General Taylor right in thinking that such discipline would free the President to march from one foreign policy triumph to another? That, I think, is the illusion. The world, after all, is filled with strong central governments and docile journals. They are the rule rather than the exception. Brazil is just such a place. So are South Africa, Russia, and, so far as the protection of official secrets is concerned, Great Britain. No doubt this is what explains Britain's stunning success in Ireland, South Africa's happy relations with her northern neighbors, Russia's bumper crops of wheat. General


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Taylor ought to go back over this question of social discipline one more time, and so should the Senate.

THOMAS POWERS

**TRAVESTIES**

# THE STAGE

By now anyone within reach of a New York publication knows—vaguely, at least—what Tom Stoppard's *Travesties* is about. In Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce*, the playwright came across an account of a production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, put on in Zurich in 1918, for which James Joyce was business manager and Henry Carr, a minor British consular official, played Algernon; the performance ended in a legal dispute between Joyce and Carr over a pair of trousers and in Carr's finding his way into the pages of *Ulysses*. Discovering or remembering that both Lenin and Tristan Tzara, like Joyce, were sitting out the war in Zurich, Stoppard decided to mix a little fact and a lot of fancy into a mélange of revolutionary art and politics. Henry Carr is Stoppard's device and his main character, an old man inventing his memoirs, remembering a might-have-been society of those heady Zurich days in which historical figures become interchangeable with the characters in Wilde's play. The result, as one has come to expect from Stoppard, is an intellectual knockout comedy which may —or may not—have serious implications.

Judging from other reviews, from comments by friends and fellow playgoers, from interviews with Stoppard and John Wood (who plays Henry Carr), I gather that the play is being offered and taken primarily as a literary game. It moves cheerfully from parody to direct quotation to song-and-dance to monologue. The script is a cornucopia of puns, jokes and allusions, and it is played at a verbal deadrun. Audiences are invited to warm themselves at the fires of self-congratulation as they recognize the use and misuse of lines and scenes from *Earnest* (and from *Hamlet*: Stoppard did write *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*); as they savor the double-joke of the Cecily-Gwendolen meeting from *Ernest* being done as a Gallagher-and-Sheean turn; as they snap up snippets of Joyce and nibble nuggets of Lenin. There is, however, a pedagogical undertone which assumes that the audience may need a little guidance in these matters, and Stoppard has devised a variety of comic tricks to disguise great chunks of exposition. The most obvious example is a mock interview in which Joyce elicits some of the history and theory of Dada from Tzara.

All of the performers are asked to play long and complicated speeches at a clip which suggests that it is the sound more than the meaning of the words that interests Stoppard and his director, Peter Wood. The characters are conceived and performed as cartoons, most of them effectively. For instance, Tim Curry—fresh from *The Rocky Horror Show*, surely one of the most nauseous of recent English successes—is an amusing and stylish Tzara. James Booth's Joyce on the other hand, completely escaped me as a conception, if he is supposed to be the standard stage Irishman, he fails, and if he is supposed to be something else, I never figured out what it is. John Wood has been excessively praised for his Henry Carr, the longest and most demanding role in the play, but I found him disappointing. I know, from having seen him in *The Comedy of Errors* at Stratford, that the actor I so admired in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* and *Sherlock Holmes* could fill a part without enriching it; his Henry Carr is such a collection of winks, nods, grimaces and palsied kicks and totters that it becomes a caricature of a caricature.

Since I tend to think that *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* has a genuine point to make about the relation of role to identity and that *Jumpers* is a serious statement about the failures of traditional humanism, I expected to find substance under the glitter of *Travesties*. The word *travesty* is used just once in the play, when Henry Carr, recalling the legal decision which went against him, labels it "a travesty of justice." This usage suggests to me that the travesties of the play are not simply those of the ideas and words of Joyce, Lenin and Tzara, but that—in his usual pessimistic way—Stoppard is viewing all of art and politics as travesty, and certainly, through Carr's reminiscence, the remembered life becomes burlesque. The Russian revolution, the writing of *Ulysses*, the anarchic implications of Dada have the same validity and the same importance as the cucumber sandwiches in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Stoppard has been doing a soft-shoe around existential chaos ever since he turned up in the English theater, and *Travesties* is either his blackest statement to date or his assumption that the surface joke is what counts. I tend toward the second reading, classing *Travesties* with *After Magritte* rather than *Jumpers*.

The disenchanted tone of this review should not be taken as a blanket condemnation of the play. It is a lively show, often funny, frequently foolish, which managed to hold my attention for almost three hours. Still, as one allusively witty rain of words after another dropped on my head, I found myself remembering Dynamene's line from Christopher Fry's *A Phoenix Too Frequent*: "You needn't/Labor to prove your secondary education."

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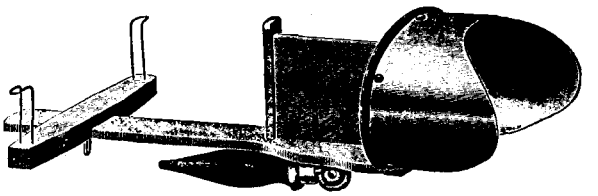
# ON SEEING 'NASHVILLE' IN NASHVILLE

NEIL J. O'CONNELL



AT long last, *Nashville* came home to Nashville. I had waited over two months to view this universally acclaimed film. An occasional business trip to New York or Washington had failed to give me a glimpse of what Altman had wrought on celluloid of Music City, U.S.A. A day of repose gave me the opportunity I had waited for.

Robert Altman could not have chosen a more suitable context for viewing his film. It was a pity and quite shabby that New York had the opportunity to view *Nashville* first. The cinema featuring *Nashville* was located at a suburban shopping mall where just days before several hundred shoppers forsook the lures of Woolco to await the personal appearance of Johnny Cash to autograph his autobiography, *The Man in Black*. A multiplication of the volume had miraculously occurred as the crowd kept vigil for their messiah with copies of his testament clutched like Sunday morning Bibles in their hands.

Inside the theater, the three filmed advertisements for local goods and services which preceded the main feature enhanced Altman's commercialized credits. For a moment I thought they were an intentional part of Altman's masterwork. Even the filmed National Anthem, played by an all-white Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, high school band attired in colonial garb, prepared the audience for the political satirizations of the motion picture. Like people in many other cities these days since Vietnam and Watergate, Nashville audiences are not quite so enthusiastic about the National Anthem and this particular audience struggled with hesitancy to their feet. It reminded me of Ebbets Field and Gladys Gooding. In fact, at the conclusion of the Anthem, a voice hollered, "Play ball!" A Black couple, two rows ahead of me, decided to sit the Anthem out and incur a possible misdemeanor recently imposed by the state legislature to enforce democratic patriotism. No one made a citizen's arrest.

I was greatly distracted viewing a film set against familiar people and locales. Images of faculty I teach with and students I have taught flashed on the screen. Streets and buildings of daily acquaintance repeatedly arrested me. Altman had done his homework well. Obviously he knew intimately the geographical and physical features of the urban backdrop he had filmed. The massive automobile crash occurred where massive crashes normally occur in Nashville. The burlap walls of the Old Time Picking Parlor and the mural of the da Vinci man astride a guitar at the Exit/In were authentic. The casual account of the history of the Nashville Parthenon delivered in the final scene was accurate. And, yes, Virginia, Goo-Goo Candy actually exists in Nashville, even though some New York cinema savants would attribute it to Altman's fertile imagination. Lack of recognition of Elliott Gould and Julie Christie by music industry leaders is thoroughly possible in a city where films like *Walking Tall, Part 2* and *Return to Macon County* were playing simultaneously at three theaters and *Nashville* itself was booked at a single house.

But *Nashville* at times portrayed a Nashville which was unfamiliar to me. The intensity of Black-white social integration depicted in *Nashville* was unreal for the non-fictitious Nashville. St. Henry's Catholic Church, where Haven Hamilton's red-haired public relations secretary worshiped on *Nashville*'s Sunday of separated congregations, had one Black face too many when Joe Broadway appeared there as a worshiper. While Nashville's Catholics have been long since technically integrated, Black Catholics report that the predominantly white parishes frequently experience a cold front when white hands have to thrust themselves into Black hands at the handshake of Peace. Consequently, many Black Catholics, including a family on the same road as St. Henry's, prefer to drive several miles from all over the Nashville metropolitan area to attend Sunday services at the former segregated Black parish near Fisk University.

Again, there were just too many Black faces in the Old Time Picking Parlor and Exit/In scenes. I have yet to see a Black person at the Parlor, and the Exit/In attracts a mere handful of Blacks except when it sponsors a rare Soul, Blues, or Jazz program. The truth is that for the majority of Blacks country-western music is repulsive since it symbolizes white, redneck racism. Though Blacks patronize Opryland, like any other commercial recreation-amusement park, they shun the Grand Ole Opry performances as if they would degenerate their health. I have heard Black Nashvillians tensely request a change of stations if I had accidentally tuned in on a country-western broadcast. An imaginary line surrounds North Nashville, the euphemistic title for Nashville's oldest Black neighborhood. Within this line, Country Music City, U.S.A. ceases to exist. Radios in North Nashville probably play Bach, Beethoven, Montovani

FATHER NEIL J. O'CONNELL, O.F.M., *is Acting Chairperson of the History Department of Fisk University in Nashville.*



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more frequently than they play Cash, Twitty, or Parton. Enthusiasm for viewing *Nashville* itself has been wanting among Black Nashvillians, even though they might recognize friends, relatives and themselves in several background shots of the film.

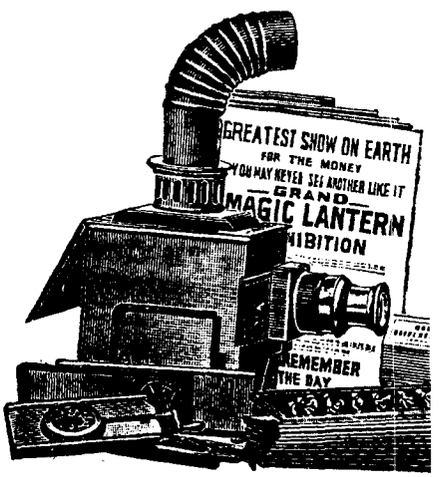
Opel's journalistic soliloquy for the BBC on the traumas of busing also did not represent the realities of Nashville. In this case, Black-white integration has proceeded comparatively well. Perhaps it will be from this minor success that true social integration will come for Nashville. Massive court-ordered, county-wide busing has endured in Nashville for four years. True, the Metropolitan School Board did take every legal step to prevent the application of the program, the rate of white student absenteeism did soar for the first few weeks, and a limited few white parents did picket some select schools, but the current bloody agony of Boston and Louisville on the busing issue has been wholly remote from the Nashville scene. The School Board made no demagogic appeals to cultivate their offices and the people did not engage in ugly confrontations. The agitation for legislation limiting or eliminating busing has diminished each year. The opening of school in Nashville in this Fall of 1975 was normal and without incident.

If these are my reactions in viewing *Nashville* mainly from the perspective of a white person residing in Black Nashville, then the reaction of Nashville's music establishment will undoubtedly be stronger. And to this point, they have been.

But Altman tells us that the Nashville in *Nashville* is a sacrament for the United States at the time of its Bicentennial. In this light, I and fellow Nashvillians would be too harsh to seek a literal presentation of Nashville in the film. But this is difficult for Nashvillians to avoid for they do live in the Vatican of the Bible Belt and religious fundamentalism. Southern Protestantism is devoid of the sacramentalism which Altman himself experienced in his younger years as a Catholic and which carries over into his films. Therefore, Altman and the more sophisticated devotees of the cinema should not be shocked when Nashvillians become critical of the veracity and appropriateness of this precedent-setting film.

At one point, however, Altman threw his sacrament aside and communicated directly with his audience. As Haven Hamilton's public relations secretary delivered her boozy critique of Tennessee anti-Catholicism expressed in the John F. Kennedy election of 1960, the audience in which I sat became suddenly subdued and sullen.

Like all sacramental rituals, Altman's *Nashville* employs vivid visual symbolism to deliver his message. The symbol which dominates all else in *Nashville* is that of the automobile. Every segment of *Nashville* presents the internal combustion engine in various guises. The omnipresent sound truck of the candidate rolls silently through Nashville's streets. The massive highway crash occurs soon after the first evidence of Barbara Jean's impending psychological crack-up. Two young Nashvillians engage their vehicles in a fender-bender and leap out to pummel each other while in the foreground one of Altman's twenty-four characters tipsily contrives to evade the clutches of her pick-up truck ensconced "husband." The automobile race track even drowns out the live country music provided for the racing fans. While the rest of Nashville prays, Opel makes a Sunday visit to the automobile graveyard and the school bus lot. An erstwhile rock singer rolls about on his three-wheeled motorcycle on the prowl for female sexual response. The cavalcade of sleek black limousines bearing the unseen candidate silently glides into Centennial Park. Even one of the major characters makes his living as a chauffeur to visiting celebrities.




The ubiquity of the automobile in *Nashville* conforms to the reality of Nashville, for the automobile dominates the city. Nashville is the hub of three major interstate highways which spin off to St. Louis, Louisville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, Birmingham, Knoxville and Memphis. In effect these are pilgrimage routes which weekly bear the motorized country music fans to the Friday and Saturday evening performances of the Grand Ole Opry. The new Grand Ole Opry building, located in the northeastern suburbs of the city on the Cumberland River, reinforces the automobile domination of Nashville, since it is accessible only by automobile. Evel Knievel is one of the ultimate folk heroes of Nashville and a motion picture featuring grueling contests among automobiles with the battered automobile star of the film displayed in the theater lobby is a guaranteed success. A video-taped bulletin of a motorcyclist setting a world record by leaping over twenty-one Vegas at a local race track can be a normal way of beginning a late evening video newscast. Car washes, automotive parts dealers, parking lots, and automobile showrooms proliferate the Nashville landscape. Parking at Vanderbilt University is fierce and gives the impression that each student, faculty and administrator uses two automobiles. Outside even the poorest residences several automobiles gather in various stages of automobile transplant.

Thus, country music, middle America and the automobile come together in Nashville, and Altman is quick to reflect this. There is certainly a practical reason why this combination is so. In the South, mass transit and interurban passenger service is so poor



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and the distances are so great that the automobile has become a necessity. In the vicinity of my residence in North Nashville, decent and reasonable grocery shopping is so remote that the lack of an automobile could make eating a real challenge. One wonders that in Tennessee and adjacent states the lack of automobile inspection laws and mandatory automobile insurance is a grace to the low-income population who would otherwise be reduced to near-starvation if they could not maneuver their dilapidated vehicles along the roads.

In *Nashville*, however, the symbolism of the automobile is greater for Altman than its practicality for those who live Nashville everyday. An automobile is, as its name signifies, a vehicle which moves of itself. It is the epitome of rugged individualism and that accompanying alienation which it produces. The automobile is total mobility, flexibility and rootlessness. Through it one can automatically cut oneself off from historical and contemporary communality. A hot, humid summer afternoon in Nashville realizes this as thousands of air-conditioned automobiles ply the streets. The drivers, frequently the sole occupants of their vehicles, are detached from one another and the street sounds with their rolled up windows and radio-filled interiors. In *Nashville*, the automobiles are the symbols of the individualism and alienation which Altman sees stalking America and which they have done so much to create. The sound truck of the unseen Walker does not just represent the candidate but *is* the candidate whose manufactured media image has become greater than his real self. When he appears later in more formal attire in the Centennial Park cavalcade (or is it a cortege?) he coolly turns around and speeds off in detached security as the shots ring out to cut down Barbara Jean who has progressively become unattached from her own reality through the course of the film. The superstud folksinger, Tom, cannot even hear the loudly shouted, "I love you," when it is scrawled in lipstick on his bathroom mirror. All he hears is the sound of his tape-recorded singing voice. In the meantime, the automobile and its extension, the jet plane, shuttle his playmates to his side at the sound of his disembodied voice over the telephone. Opel prates to him about her own mobile international sexual adventures which have all become slightly confused for her as separate experiences. It is thoroughly appropriate that Tom's sexual encounters take place in the ultimate by-product of the automobile's mobility, rootlessness, and impersonality—the motel room. The deaf children of Altman's *Nashville* actually communicate and "sing" more effectively than the major characters of the film who possess physical hearing. At the race track, the music star hopeful resorts to sign language like the deaf children to make her song heard above the roar of the racers. What Altman is saying through his automobile sacrament is that we have become automobiles ourselves in our coolly detached and rootless mobility.

It is at this point that the automobile and country music come together. Country music is an expression of the alienation and search for roots of a people. Its origins are in the poor whites of the Appalachian South who find themselves caught up in the bewilderment of poverty and exploitive forces beyond their control. It expresses a longing for times, places and faces of familiar comfort and stability. There is a poignancy in the music which can only be understood by being present on a Saturday afternoon at Farmers' Market Warehouse Store in Nashville when the local poor whites come to do their weekly shopping. Country music aptly embodies their tired, confusion-ridden, and unhealthy faces. It is here that Altman fails. In *Nashville* we see too much of the establishment which produces or hopes to produce the music but we see very little of those who listen to it. The vast majority of those who listen to Barbara Jean frequent the weary Nashville General Hospital. They could not afford the competence and comforts of Vanderbilt Hospital where Barbara Jean retires to recuperate. Altman has forgotten to depict the forlorn listeners of country music in the mining towns of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee or the leathery-skinned farmers of the south, midwest and west who live at the mercy of climate, middle-men, and the federal government. Many of the older country music stars themselves came from these backgrounds, and I am suspicious that the spangled costumes and makeup are but a cover-up for the scars of earlier poverty. The gauntness and not overly handsome or beautiful faces of many of the country music performers is something their audiences can identify with.

Urbane viewers of *Nashville* might snicker at the music represented in the film. The original lyrics of several of the songs might produce a guffaw, but they are not too distant from such numbers as, "I've got the hungries for love and I'm standing in your welfare line," and "Papa was a preacher and Mama was a go-go girl," which I have heard in recent years. The reality which many of these snobbish viewers might fail to perceive is that they are in the minority and the vast majority of white Americans (and even some few Black Americans) are listening to this music and these lyrics because they find in them a genuine expression of their confusion, alienation and rootlessness. Nashville is the center upon which all this listening is focused. Where in times past people once traveled to religious shrines, they now pilgrim to Nashville to gawk at the Ryman Auditorium where the Opry was born, the new Grand Ole Opry, and the relics in the Country Music Hall of Fame. One has only to listen to the promotion of a prepackaged weekend tour to Nashville on a Johnstown, Pennsylvania, radio station to understand how far the country music phenomenon and Nashville, its cathedral, have permeated American life.

There is, however, a complexity about Nashville which the simplicity of country music camouflages and which no motion picture, including *Nashville*, could ever capture. The



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main offices and publishing houses of several major denominations are located in Nashville, yet the amount of adult bookstores, pornographic theaters and massage parlors, must be one of the highest per capita of any major city in the nation. Sunday church attendance is highly prized and practiced, yet Sunday shopping is rampant and Lord's Day liquor drinks may be purchased. Nashville is the city of Andrew Jackson and James Knox Polk and yet can also boast of the activities of a Cordell Hull, Estes Kefauver and Albert Gore. The evening newspaper carries the final lines of the last stanza of *America* as part of its masthead while the morning paper features a full-page interview with the leading local madame. The southern drawl in Nashville is nuanced by a slight midwestern twang. Though it is the center of country music, Nashville found its economic origins as an education center (fifteen campuses currently), railroad center, banking center and light industry center. Music City, U.S.A. also refers to itself as the Athens of the South and sports a full scale replica of the Athenian Parthenon. Country music blares from loudspeakers on shops along lower Broadway while a Public Library FM station presents a rich daily program of classical music and intellectually stimulating information programs.

There was something ironic about the final scene of *Nashville* as the camera panned up the gray sky above the tragedy just played before the Parthenon which few viewers will be aware of. This scene had been filmed on the days immediately preceding Independence Day, 1974. I had stumbled upon the set on the evening of July 2 as I strolled about the Parthenon with some out-of-town visitors who had come for the impending holiday weekend. There was something ominous about the scene. A summer rain had just happened and the dark air was laden with that humid dampness which muffles sounds. The south lawn of the Parthenon was set with concession booths wrapped in red, white and blue. Plastic coverings on cameras and recording equipment rustled fitfully in the moisture-filled breeze. A huge American flag heaved on the side of the Parthenon. Except for an occasional security guard or technician, the setting was deserted. Everything appeared ready for a celebration of the forthcoming Independence holiday. Yet, somehow I felt as if I were in a theater after a disastrous opening night. What had been designed for a celebration was now to be used for a final commendation. It was like the day after the end of the world. Altman had deliberately chosen the Independence Day observance exactly two years before the Bicentennial Independence Day to film the climax scene of his statement that there might be very little to celebrate at the Bicentennial. His choice of the Parthenon replica for the backdrop of this scene is significant for it represents a state which purported to be a democracy but culminated in a military dictatorship and a debilitating series of military engagements for the sake of preserving the freedoms it had long lost by becoming an imperial power.

When the house lights went up, the audience wavered for a moment and then began walking pensively toward the exits. There was a bit of difficulty in shifting from the filmed Nashville to the immediate reality of Nashville at the theater door, although New Yorkers have been doing such a shift for several decades of motion pictures. There was no applause nor outward signs of approval or disapproval. In the lobby, a Nashville matron commented to her companion, "I really didn't understand the ending."

## BOOKS

# A SOMETIME MASTER

**GENE H. BELL**

***Look at the Harlequins!***
VLADIMIR NABOKOV
*McGraw-Hill, $7.95*

***Tyrants Destroyed***
VLADIMIR NABOKOV
*McGraw-Hill, $8.95*

Aside from erotic chases and émigré moods, Nabokov best likes writing about a breezy, Cambridge-educated, émigré Slavic aesthete, who knows butterflies, talks *l'art pour l'art*, thumbs his upper-class nose at social questions (never sniping at the woes of Russian refugees, though), and heaps scorn on Marx, Freud, Reds, thinkers, "politics," and several hundred major authors. This chap serves as hero to *Glory*, *The Gift*, and *Sebastian Knight*; he bobs up in other books as well.

Nabokov repeatedly denies that the above fellow is himself. As novelist, he asserts, he is really recasting a casual fact of life—his being a Cambridge-educated, émigré Russian aesthete who thumbs his upper-class nose etc. etc.—into Art. "Publicist" fiction being his prime peeve, he bristles at any identification between the ways and views of that character and those of V. Nabokov.

Whatever the uneasy logic of that disclaimer, *Look at the Harlequins!* (or LATH, Nabokov's abbreviation) casts off any erstwhile distancing devices. The book tells of Vadim Vadimovich, B.A. (Cantab.), famed novelist



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and émigré aesthete, who, besides displaying the above Nabokovian traits, also manages to 1) take "Irisin" (Nabokov's was "Sirin") as pen-name, 2) come to the U.S. in 1942 (same date), 3) shift to writing, successfully, in English, 4) teach lit. at a college known for its Hotel School (see in 1958 Cornell directory), 5) use a pedagogy identical to you-know-whose, 6) get rich from a book about an oldster-youngster love affair, and 7) produce excellent novels in both tongues, with titles and plots conspicuously resembling those of a real-life Russian novelist (a sampler: *Tamara, Camera Lucida*, and *Dr. Olga Repnin* in LATH correspond to *Mary, Camera Obscura*, and *Pnin*).

This system of self-reference serves as the scaffold of LATH. The remaining space is filled mostly by further Nabokoviana, personal tidbits waiting to be spotted by Nabokov-watchers—such as "Vadim's" Nansen passport, his composing books on 3 X 5 cards, his insomnia. Vadim casually muses on "the texture of time"—tuned-in V.N. fans will thrill in recognizing a key phrase from *Ada*. Vadim somewhere snaps, "I thought Pound a fake"; in a 1968 interview Nabokov barked, "Pound, that incredible fake."

To vary the picture, Nabokov employs a little trick—he gives his hero select facts the precise opposite of their real-life models. Vadim marries four times; Nabokov's own marriage is fifty years strong. Vadim twice pleads ignorance about butterflies; everyone knows of V.N.'s entomological obsession. Vadim's father is an uncultured, reactionary rake who dies in a duel; Nabokov's father was a cultured liberal activist who won in a duel. This is jolly old Nabokov winking at his followers, the devotees who like chuckling at that sort of thing. It is also the crudest, most mechanical mirror-imaging, irony for beginners, a bare notch above growling, "Well, *you're* early today."

Perhaps to breathe some drama into this static exercise, Nabokov hounds Vadim with signs suggesting he might be but a shadow, an impersonation of a greater man whose initial is "N." People confuse Vadim's father with Nabokov's; they mistakenly substitute Nabokov's book titles for his own. This supposedly is meant as parody; Vadim employs the word, and his books clearly are skewed versions of Nabokov's. Parody, however, ideally elicits belly laughs, and so much self-allusion, whether "ironic" or straight, just isn't funny. Indeed, parody implies a humorous, satirizing attitude toward its target, while Nabokov—who takes his art and ideas very seriously—is incapable of self-irony. His wit is invariably at the expense of others.

As the Latin proverb says, even LATH isn't without strong points. Virtually every sentence is admirably composed—Nabokov is after all a great cadenza artist, the Franz Liszt of English prose. His set characterizations still amuse. His eye for flora-fauna remains vivid, eidetic as ever, though some lush landscapes seem gratuitous, flourishes thrown in for virtuosity's sake. Vadim's four marriages make possible the only sustainedly good parts of the book—the droll erotic escapades, both in bed and out. Paris in the 20s is nicely summed up for its seasonal hues, and there are a few quotable one-liners about brothels in France.

> *"In the world of athletic games there has never been . . . a World Champion of Lawn Tennis* and *Ski; yet in two Literatures, as dissimilar as grass and snow, I have been the first to achieve that kind of feat. I do not know . . . what physical stress may be involved in serving one day a sequence of thirty-six aces at sea level and on the next soaring from a ski jump 136 meters through bright mountain air . . . But I have managed to transcend the rack and the wrench of literary metamorphosis . . .*
>
> *". . . Was I an excellent writer? I was an excellent writer . . ."*
>
> —Look at the Harlequins!

But these scattered strengths are vitiated by the hero's unrelieved resemblance to his cranky creator. Nabokov's notorious quirks, moreover, have become too pronounced for comfort. Earlier he had attacked "Einstein's slick formulae" (*sic*), even when admitting to ignorance of physics. Here he ridicules "Neochomsk" and "the About-Nothing land of philosophic linguistics." I ponder that potshot, and wonder just how much of Chomsky Nabokov knows (and by extension how much Marx, how much Freud . . .) In addition, the snobby side of Nabokov, ever-addicted to easy derogation, here turns simply perverse, nasty. Such characterizations as "a particularly stupid baby-sitter" or "Mrs. Blagovo was a half-witted cripple" are pointless cruelties, big guns for small prey. Who gets it next—double amputee grape-pickers?

LATH furthermore is heavy with a schoolboy-smartsy anti-Communism—this from a writer allegedly scornful of "political-publicist" fiction! Bolsheviks are referred to as "rats in ratholes"—a facile epithet, unsubtle, overstated, like war propaganda. There is a two-page attack on the idiocies of Soviet rhetoric. There is a visit to Leningrad where, like a Luce or a Buckley, Vadim strings *bons mots* about the slow, slow restaurant service. Nabokov's criticisms, as any visitor to Russia knows, are very true—and very obvious and easy. They show a politically platitudinous mind at work. Satirizing Soviet hotels and set phrases is like wisecracking about Twinky ads or Tricky Dick. Who can't hit the side of a barn?

LATH is a book of scant intrinsic interest. For full impact it depends exclusively on reader's initiation into a private cult. It has no outside referents, and its recurrent bouts of self-praise (see box) surpass any narcissism in *Making It* or Mailer. It is the ultimate special-interest novel, serving the particularist concern of one man—and of his academic acolytes, that obedient progeny who, after extolling LATH, will run off and track down the hotel allusions, the Slavic puns and quotes, the old scores settled by hidden sneers. What is most disturbing is that, save for Richard Poirier, no reviewer has seen fit to discuss the book's grave



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flaws, disturbing indeed that such onanistic fluff, such bad books as *Ada* or *LATH*—books so querulous and mean, intellectually so vacuous and flat—can command floods of servile applause from learned literati. Never mind the Soviets; Nabokov is the Andrei Zhdanov of American lit.crit.

*Tyrants Destroyed* is a selection of stories, twelve from the Russian, one originally in English. An uneven crop, it gathers some of Nabokov's best and worst. The title piece—a schoolteacher's angered scribblings about an ex-schoolmate turned national dictator—is of the latter kind. It proceeds much the same way as all of Nabokov's forays into "politics," *i.e.* by *ad hominen* attack on the tyrant's figure, face, voice, and personality, rather than on his actions, ideas, and context. Nabokov's narrator even claims that, had he shot the future dictator during his schooldays, the country would now be free. (Nabokov is sufficiently naive—or 19th century—to believe tyranny springs into existence by the sheer will of one individual.) Another piece, "Terror," is compared by Nabokov to *Nausea*—he praising his story so as to pan Sartre. The two narratives do show striking parallels in plot and imagery, but where Sartre's portrayal of a dark spell of depression has a nervous, infectious horror, Nabokov's attempt is rather standoffish, the coolly controlled depression of a smooth aristocrat. It rings false.

Elsewhere, though, Nabokov does what he can do best—such as evoke the minute tensions arising between two persons ill at ease with one another. In "Music" a young Russian finds himself trapped when, during a concert, he spots his ex-wife a few seats off; in "Lik" a sad, small-time stage actor is fast-talked into a loan and otherwise set upon by a bumptious ex-playmate. From these little disturbances Nabokov consistently conjures up an ingenious way out, a luminous, serio-comic last twist. Nabokov can be touchingly nostalgic, as in "The Vane Sisters," a wintry recollection of two hurtful deaths by an emotionally involved professor; the spiritualist sub-plot gives it an added touch both eerie and lighthearted. As is also his bent, Nabokov exploits the humor in absurd situations. In "A Nursery Tale," a lustful German eyes the girls on the street, pacts with a she-Mephisto, and, thanks to her, his fantasies are almost realized—that "almost" is precisely where Nabokov the card-sharper comes in. "The Admiralty Spire" is masterful, a mini-*Pale Fire* built around a bad novel—its plot under attack by the original of its protagonist, its unknown author shifting in possible identity some four times, even briefly becoming the novel's hero's original's first love!

Unlike LATH, much of *Tyrants Destroyed* is quite likable. A couple these pieces appeared in *The New Yorker*—understandably, for, while transcending the spruce neatness of that magazine, they also contain the right mixture of civilized grace and gaiety, of understated warmth and wit. Several stories here are as good as anything in Chekhov or Joyce. Reading them, you wonder what ever became of that Nabokov—something to do with life in the Alps, I suppose. But after *Ada* and *LATH* one can sympathize with E. M. Forster, who simply stopped writing novels when he felt he had said all he could say.

## *Curtain*

AGATHA CHRISTIE

*Dodd, Mead,* $7.95

**JOHN HEIDENRY**

I sometimes wonder whether the people who buy such things in bus stations and off drugstore racks as westerns and Gothics, romances, science fiction, detective novels, and just plain best-selling trash, ever feel curious about the volume in the next bin by Flaubert or Kafka. I should say prick of conscience but that would sound elitist. (It is somehow possible to endorse Virginia Woolf's noble snobbery and yet want to remain a solid democrat.) Perhaps the fact that these latter books never seem, to these piranhas of popular literature, to be bought, while their own fare is ever being freshly restocked, is substitute enough for a critical attitude. As with groceries, what is good is fresh and what is stale is bad.

On the other hand there is the time-pressed highbrow who is still only halfway through that paperback by Nietzsche and just beginning a new biography of Henry James— both uncomfortably read under the volcano of fourscore unopened books he recklessly purchased every time he got with five miles of a bookstore. It is in praise of the commonsensical sons and daughters of the pioneers that they buy one book at a time and read it.

For myself I am like Lamb and have a curiosity about everything in the form of a book. "I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so unexcluding." Here, in fact, I am, quite willing to rub shoulders with the millions who for more than fifty years have turned to Dame Agatha Christie in moments of special loneliness like a train journey. And, after all, have I not memorized my Sherlock Holmes, that *Don Quixote* of Edwardian England; and read a book or two apiece by Le Carré, Chandler, Spillane, Ross Macdonald, Carr, Ellery Queen, and Dame Agatha herself? Nor was this labor undertaken while I was on a trip, and needed to be amused, but in the gloom of my study.

Here we have, apparently, a *chef d'oeuvre,* written in the forties and orginally intended for posthumous publication. As anyone vulnerable to publicity already knows, in *Curtain* the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot solves his last case and dies. Not anything equivocal either like toppling over the edge of the Reichenbach Falls. On page 238 like a doornail is he dead.

On page 35 I had guessed the identity of the murderer, by the next page knew the victim, and on page 112 deduced the motive. (On page 41 I had changed my mind and reversed murderer and victim, but on page 69 returned steadfast to my original position.) The fact that I was wrong on all counts at book's end did not affect my opinion that I *should* have been right. It is something like the same



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feeling I get when throwing aside a half-finished crossword puzzle. I *could* work the whole thing out if I were to put in the effort of a lifetime: but only pathological illiterates have the necessary vocabulary to perform the task effortlessly.

Yes, readers, Book Inspector Heidenry is puzzled by this and almost every other detective novel he has read. The "atmosphere" of a Christie whodunit seems to be its weakest point. The characters operate in a sterile landscape that only those who have seen Margaret Rutherford in such glorious sleuthings about as *Murder Most Foul* are able to make allowances for. As usual the plotting and clue-dropping is so preposterous as to defeat utterly the normal genius of the human mind. As for motive I should think that Dame Agatha, like many of her colleagues, often cheated her readers—as here—by trespassing into the realm of science fiction. And I must finally complain that the method by which murder is committed in this instance is just about the most far-fetched in the annals of crime.

Perhaps if westerns and Gothics and romances are seldom popular with serious readers, while detective fiction continues to be read in every quarter, that is because almost uniquely in literature it calls upon the analytical powers of the mind. And yet so rarely, I find, with any real grace. Perhaps the secret of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was that he was above all a gracious man of letters. In *Curtain* Dame Agatha has written an almost exclusively mathematical skeleton of a novel; and those who wish to see just how pure their deductive capabilities are will find the opportunity here. Any other aspect of this book, or judgment thereupon, it would be an inconsequence to dwell upon or pronounce.

## *Secrecy in the Church*

RICHARD N. OSTLING

*Harper & Row*, $6.95

**JAMES W. CAREY**

Ostling's book is sub-titled "A Reporter's Case for the Christian's Right to Know." Unfortunately, it is not a very good case. It does confirm, however, what many of us have suspected —that there has been a reversal of roles of the 2nd and 4th estates. Ostling attempts to make a case for the Christian's right to know in three ways. First, by examining secrecy as it is currently practiced by the Vatican and the American church, particularly as it regards church finances. Second, he contrasts this secrecy with what he takes to be a sixteen century tradition of the church of openness and sharing; he argues that the curtain of secrecy was drawn only with the birth of the printing press. He further argues that the right of privacy, historically supported by the church, has led to a pro-secrecy bias that often sacrifices the common good to this right. Finally, he makes a "case for candor," a *moral* justification for the right to know, and brings all Christian churches under its imperatives.

While Ostling, in the name of the people's right to know, pleads for an end to secrecy in the church and the elimination of clerical privilege, he testifies, though implicitly, to the secrecy of the press and the privilege of the journalist. I do not underestimate the difficulty in covering a national bishops' conference, but it is scarcely a less isolated conclave than is Ostling's employer, Time Inc. I understand the forbiddingness of the New York Chancery Office, but how does it contrast with the imperiousness of the *New York Times*? I think Ostling is correct in arguing against certain aspects of clerical privilege and secrecy but is newsmen's privilege and secrecy, which buttresses "the right to know," another case? As the church has become less central to and increasingly powerless in society, the power of the press has been enhanced and the role of the newsman elevated, if not by trade—though that is worth considering—then by coincidence. So now the press uses its moral stricture—"the right to know"—to bring other institutions in line with journalistic need and imperative. The suspicion, therefore, arises that Ostling's use of the "Christian's right to know" will serve largely to make the church easier for newsmen to cover. He desires to remove all impediments to journalistic access, to streamline that old hulk along the lines of a modern public relations organization, to festoon it with briefings, press conferences, backgrounders and press releases. But whether such a doctrine and the attendant procedures increase knowledge, excavate the truth, improve communication, or aid the church in its spiritual and pastoral mission is moot. He quotes with approval Monsignor Vincent Yzermans' statement that it "is merely to state the case that newsmen only make mistakes when the sources of information are closed to them and they have to revert to the 'jungle telegraphy' system of reporting." This is mere whimsy. After Watergate we know that jungle telegraphy may be the only reasonably reliable system of reporting.

The concept of the public's right to know, even in a strictly secular context, is less an articulate doctrine of clear import than a semantic beacon paraded out by publishers at any hint of criticism. While Ostling chastises the 1947 Commission on Freedom of the Press for never really making a case for the right to know, he should mention that no one has made much of a case for it in the interim. The Constitution does not protect the public's right to know, only freedom of expression—quite a different thing. The transformation of the First Amendments into a public right has proved to be a rather arduous undertaking for the courts, and whether the doc-


**REVIEWERS**

GENE H. BELL has published fiction and criticism in *Science and Society*, *The Nation*, and other journals.

JOHN HEIDENRY is a free-lance writer and critic living in St. Louis.

JAMES W. CAREY teaches communications at the University of Illinois.

STU COHEN is with the Center for Criminal Justice at Boston University.

PETER WOOD, staff writer for *the paper*, Fordham University, is a former Golden Gloves boxer.

DENNIS VELLUCCI served as a student intern at *Commonweal* in 1975.




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trine of the right to know is a better protection against tyranny than is freedom of expression no one quite knows, though I certainly have my doubts.

But even if we grant the legitimacy of the doctrine, why should it be applied to the church? Ostling's answer: because of the odiousness of secrecy. (Doesn't anyone read Simmel any longer on the positive values of secrecy?) However, there are two dimensions to secrecy. The first is secrecy relative to members of the church. On this point Ostling is partially correct: this historic gulf between the hierarchy, clergy and laity must be bridged and the community must be brought into a full, knowledgeable and influential role in the church. But despite this truth, it is not at all clear that the form of communication signaled by a phrase like the right to know—journalistic coverage through canons of objective reporting in the secular and religious press—is the most desirable and efficacious way to organize communication, to link the church together in shared knowledge and belief. He approvingly quotes Bernard Häring to the effect that the basic right of the community is to speech that is absolutely trustworthy. But one would be hard-pressed to argue that such is the product of the right to know, for our secular press is a tissue of distortions, lies, propaganda, public relations and even occasional truths. It is about the best we can get in secular matters, but it is not fertile ground for the Holy Spirit and that after all must be a Christian concern.

The other dimension of secrecy is external, the willingness of the church to open its meetings and to share its deliberations and financial statements with the wider community. He valiantly and unconvincingly argues for greater openness on the part of the church—a virtue, to be sure, though not for the reasons put forward. He radically underestimates the hostility toward the church except as its beliefs become indistinguishable from those of the larger community, though his own book testifies to the irritation provoked when it marches indifferent to fashionable doctrine. He suggests that the church would receive better treatment on school aid questions if it were more open on financial matters. He further avers "openness increases respect for Catholicism in the broader society and enhances the influences of the faith." Excessively pious hopes, I think.

Ostling argues that "full freedom will come when the secular press, the Catholic press, the laity and the general public insist on their right to know." This is less the beginning than the end of freedom. The church must maintain a structure of communication and a notion of truth and participation quite at variance to that signaled by the right to know. It must do this simply to survive as an institution, a rather important consideration. But its uniqueness contributes to the good of the general society as well, for it is only where there are distinct, pluralistic institutions that freedom can flourish. Sticking every institution into the coarse blender of the right to know merely enhances the monopoly of the newsmen and the homogeneity of society.

If the church still has faith in itself, it will create a style of participation and a form of communication, a sense of truth and freedom, consistent with its own traditions and doctrines. If it has lost this faith then the cosmetic surgery of a notion like the public's right to know won't do it any good.

I share Ostling's desire to end secrecy and to enhance openness, sharing and participation; they are the verbal talismen of our time. But to pursue such values through abstractions like the right to know is to chase illusions.

## *MUHAMMAD ALI*

WILFRID SHEED

*Crowell, $19.95*

**PETER WOOD**

I remember the day well. I pranced home from the gym and bounded up the stairs like a little bullet. "Dad," I said, flattery still purring within my veins, "Sid Martin wants me to go pro!" Martin, the trainer of Emile Griffith, had been watching me box and I guess he liked what he saw, (or thought he saw.) To him I was going to be his next little caucasian drawing-card—his next slugger with muscles like little ripe pumpkins. When I got home my father must have misinterpreted my intoxicated smile for genuine enthusiasm, because the following day he placed a solemn note upon my bed. It concluded with the words: "Peter, if boxing is really what you want to do, I mustn't stop you, but remember, there can only be one Muhammad Ali."

There can only be one Muhammad Ali.

Wilfrid Sheed has said the same thing to me, only in his book—written because "Even writers on economics and botany [are] tempted to have a whack at him [Ali]; the Everest of our profession . . . he has inspired more good writing . . . than anyone in the current sports world."

Sheed's book is, indeed, good writing. However, till now his good writing has been exclusively "in and around the arts" where he is regarded as "the New York intellectual's ideal of a thinking man's Catholic."

It is only with *Muhammad Ali* that Sheed lends his talent to the undernourished area of boxiana. It has been said that if *Muhammad Ali* had been written by a street-kid like Jimmy Breslin or a professor of humbug like Mailer, the book would have been as predictable as one of Ali's fights. But in teaming Sheed's class with Ali's sass, Sheed, the book promoter, like a fight promoter, has commanded ring-side attention.

Sheedian insights glow on every page. He has investigated Ali thoroughly, or as thoroughly as can be expected. Sheed gets to the navel of the situation. "Fame was always what it was all about" he says to explain why Ali became "a champion who refused to sit still in his robes and make like an archbishop." In describing the conflict between Ali's career and his religious convictions, Sheed writes of Ali "the celebrity crea-



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ture": "Someday Muslim wisdom may drag him from the limelight, but it won't be easy. He worshipped at the shrine of fame for a long time before he heard of Allah and he still bows in that direction every time he sees a Brownie or a typewriter. So the kind of Ali we get is still up to us, a reflection of what he thinks he sees in our faces."

Yet, for all of his insights into the alchemy of this marvelous thing called Ali, I got the tickling impression that Sheed felt timid, out of place in his new environment. Too many times sentences began with a limp: "What I sense is . . ." or "Does this mean . . ." or "But I wonder . . ." Sheed's intellect seems to have been humbled.

And I was always aware of Sheed the intellectual, the outsider who poked and stabbed for the truth from afar. He is like a little boy watching the action from a knot-hole in the wall. He remains detached. The reader doesn't experience a sense of immersion as one would, say, if it had been handled by other occasional boxing writers—like Mailer. Mailer's boxing prose tends to thomp and thwack; each word seems to have been typed by a left-hook; you are there. Sheed's prose, in contrast, is vibrant and amusing. He brings in morsels of elegant humor and reading him is like tasting little hors d'oeuvres ("Snapping out jabs like a wet towel.") Throughout, Sheed also maintains a simple fluidity, a form which is appealing, a quality which is enjoyable. His perceptions and awarenesses, though detached, are sensitive and keen, not unlike the right antennae of a nimble ant.

Sheed discovers Ali. But, when he goes one step further and tries to uncover Ali's soul Sheed begins to stumble. He understands the inevitable futility of such a search: "If Ali is an enigma, it is not because he hides things but because he shows so many of them and they are all different. The more you understand him today the less you will know tomorrow. So catch him now, like a cat, purring and licking his whiskers; next week he will be in the desert fasting and scourging himself. Like St. Thérèse of Lisieux he chooses everything." So Ali, like a noble onion, has his many layers and it is impossible to strip them all away.

Nevertheless, what Sheed does reveal is fascinating. He studies Ali's relationship with his father. "Cassius' success destroyed me," says Mr. Clay, "Don't let them get bigger than you." Looking toward Ali's future Sheed realizes that Ali's "Quitting boxing has to be a sickening wrench" and "his first clumsy flirtation with retirement may not be altogether a hoax but more like dipping your toe in boiling water and yanking it out again." However, Sheed senses that Ali "could make a formidable spiritual leader. Anyone who can will the future, or failing that, invent the past is in business."

For the most part Sheed's admiration for Ali is tempered and balanced. Every so often, however, it squirts out and seems to drip off the page. He refers to Ali as the "Renaissance Man" and dotes upon his "diamond studded pelt." Miraculously, Sheed does stop short and refuses to classify Ali's perspiration as holy water. Fortunately for Sheed, as well as for us, these romantic lapses are few and far between.

Sheed's Catholic background shows. He, a self-professed "ramshackle Catholic" sees aspects of Ali's crescendoing career through the eye-glasses of his own faith. Ali is almost as famous as Pope John; Ali has "one of the cagiest inner circles since Cardinal Richelieu;" his use of Allah is likened to Catholic football teams "hastily whispering Hail Marys."

I should mention the graphics. *Muhammad Ali* is sparkled with beautiful rows of color—velvet photographs covering Ali's olympic years up to the present. Nuance of action and delicate photographic statement of each plate lend an added pleasure, an added interest.

All in all, Sheed has done well. He has succeeded in blowing away much of the Ali-grand-illusion and, in its place, cultivated a sound understanding of Ali as a breathing reality. How-


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ever, one thing still remains unclear: What's really lying down there within the basement of Ali's soul? Wilfrid Sheed does not give us the answer. But in all fairness, Ali's soul, like his face in the ring, might very well be untouchable too—just another elusive target, which also floats like a butterfly.

### *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*

PHILIP AGEE

*Stonehill, $9.95*

**STU COHEN**

Thanks to two disillusioned CIA officers, a former state department employee, and a series of Congressional investigations, the American people are beginning to learn about their "invisible government." We are at last discovering truths long known to those in countries where our "secret police force" plies its trade.

The hearings have concentrated upon CIA activities within our borders. The excellent book by Victor Marchetti and John Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, explores the structure and policies of "the company" (as it is known internally). This is natural, for Marchetti's experience was at the upper echelons of the agency.

The most exciting revelations, however, have come from a man who spent 12 years as an operations officer, on the line in Latin America, Philip Agee. In 1956 Agee was a bright, patriotic and bored college graduate looking for something meaningful to do with his life. Those qualities were to lead him into the company, just as his sensitivity and changing conceptions of political morality were to lead him out.

For the first time, in Agee's book, we have a detailed account of the training of CIA officers. The description of his indoctrination is fascinating, especially the growing boyish pleasure in being a member of a "secret society":

> I'll be a warrior against communist subversive erosion of freedom and personal liberties around the world—a patriot dedicated to the preservation of my country and our way of life.

Once achieving the status of an operations officer and on his first assignment in Quito, Ecuador, there is a growing sense of power, too. The Quito CIA station launches a campaign against a leftist minister and suddenly, "Araujo's out!" "I've taken over my first operations and met my first real-live agents—at last I'm a genuine clandestine operations officer."

And so it goes, recruiting and paying agents, tapping telephones, writing outright lies for propaganda purposes—and always with the same goals; to isolate Cuba and reduce any Soviet influence in the hemisphere.

After 3 successful years in Ecuador, Agee is transferred to Montevideo, Uruguay, a step up the ladder. He fit in easily and worked very effectively until April 28, 1965: "I don't quite understand this invasion of the Dominican Republic." The Dominican adventure, the use of U.S. Marines to assure the defeat of Juan Bosch's popular constitutionalist government at the military's hands, was an opening chink in Agee's cold war armor.

> By September, the rift is widening: The more I think about the Dominican invasion the more I wonder whether the politicians in Washington really want to see reforms in Latin America . . . I think I may not have chosen the right career after all.

One year later Agee is back in Washington, separated from his wife, working on the Mexican desk at headquarters, and desperately looking for a way out. An assignment to the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City comes up and he snaps at it as a way of making potential job contacts outside the agency. His work at the Olympics is appreciated by the chief of the Mexico City station, Winfield Scott. Scott asks Agee to transfer to political work after the Olympics. The thought of more covert operations was repellent and, thus, "One more CIA career comes to an end. It was a little earlier than I had expected. . . ." That day Agee formally resigned.

By January, 1970, he had begun working on a book about the CIA. He is more than aware of the potential dynamite and personal danger inherent in the enterprise: "One word to the Mexican service and I get the one-way ride to Toluca—except it's a lovely way to go, disappearing down one of those canyons."

Agee's most important decision about the book was, ". . . to name all the names and organizations connected with CIA operations and to reconstruct as accurately as possible the events in which I participated. No more hiding behind theory and hypothetical cases. . . ." It is this decision which gives the book its flavor and importance. Not only because some of the names belong to Presidents, senators, police chiefs, or high ministers of state but because the inclusion of such names helps corroborate the events reported.

The last sections of the book are taken up with some of its most exciting moments—the writing of the manuscript, itself. Agee traveled to Montreal, to Paris in search of a publisher and to Cuba for research materials. In October of 1971 he decided to speak out and sent a letter to the Uruguayan leftist periodical, *Marcha* concerning CIA meddling in Uruguayan elections. The letter, he admits, ". . . was a mistake." Almost immedi-


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ately an old friend from the CIA appeared with "advice." Not long after the visit Agee found himself followed in the streets. He was befriended by a man and a woman who planted a bugged typewriter on him. His family was visited by company representatives. As a result his wife refused to allow his children to come to Europe for a visit. The agency thus hoped to force Agee back to the U.S. for "discussions." He finally fled to London and began utilizing the resources of the British Museum. A British publisher, Penguin, with a solid interest in the third world, gave him a contract. After approaching every major publisher in the United States, all of whom demurred, a small, new publisher, Stonehill, was found and the book finally appeared in print here.

We have before us then an important and reasonably well written book. And yet, somehow, it doesn't completely succeed. Agee adopted a diary format and *Inside the Company* presents itself as a (reconstructed) diary of the times it describes. This format is valuable and helps to impart a sense of immediacy to the events. But there are also inherent defects. A great diarist, say Samuel Pepys, speaks not only of events but also of their emotional content. This is Agee's great failing—the book is cold. Even when he mentions emotions (rarely) he is of course writing of reconstructed feelings. Are they accurate? We'll never know. You cannot express emotions merely through exclamation points. Real diaries are full of ephemera—little flashes of stuff which, although unimportant in retrospect, give the work flavor and body. This too is missing. Nor is this mere stylistic quibbling. When Agee's conversion comes we are emotionally unprepared to accept it and it becomes difficult to accept at face value.

Another weakness, although less serious, is Agee's occasional bursts of rhetoric. Increasingly toward the book's conclusion the reader is lectured about politics, economics and the class struggle. The writing here never approaches real analysis and the attempt unnecessarily clutters the whole.

These, however, are comments about what the book is not. What it is is a frighteningly clear window on a world supported by public funds for longer than some of us have been born. We have long feared these truths. Now we know them beyond any doubt. What shall we do with the knowledge?

## IN BRIEF

CARYL CHESSMAN: *The Red Light Bandit, by Frank J. Parker. Nelson-Hall, $8.95.*

It has been fifteen years since Caryl Chessman was executed in California after a 12-year stretch on death row. Frank J. Parker's well-documented book is not an argument for Chessman's innocence, but a criticism of a legal system in which the abuses that are permitted to exist can cost a man's life.

Convicted on seventeen counts including robbery, kidnapping and "unnatural sex acts" (the 1948 euphemism for forced oral sex), Chessman was not a typical criminal. He placed more importance on his public image than on his life and was overwhelmed with the fame that came with his trial and his subsequent books. He fancied himself an American François Villon, Parker writes, "to rebel by robbery . . . but also to produce great literature." The facts that the "red light bandit" never killed anyone and that he was never successful at any of his rape attempts were obscured by his obnoxious personality. His arrogance made him insist on defending himself though he had no legal background, and he made many errors of judgment that probably affected the outcome of the trial. As Parker puts it, "Chessman seemed prepared to throw out the rule book and everyone else followed suit."

Parker believes that Chessman's execution was a miscarriage of justice, regardless of whether or not he was guilty of the crimes for which he was convicted. And while Chessman's own behavior inside and outside the courtroom was responsible for his execution, the other principals in the trial can hardly be exonerated. Prosecutor J. Miller Leavy displayed "a true killer's instinct," and Judge Charles W. Fricke, who sentenced more men to death row than any other judge in the history of California, was "a highly representative specimen." Parker is most critical, though, of Governor Edmund Brown, an opponent of capital punishment who did not grant clemency because it would not have


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been to his political advantage at the time.

Though Parker's argument is overstated and his lengthy explanations of New York criminal law and the Kinsey statistics on oral sex are not really relevant to the Chessman case, this is an interesting analysis of a unique and tragic trial. DENNIS VELLUCCI

# CORRESPONDENCE

*(Continued from page 99)*

Press, 19 December) let me say this: In my head I feel I must agree with Thomas Powers, but from my guts I am cheering for Russell Baker. Here is a sketch of my reasons, in response to three propositions.

One, Mr. Powers states a reasonable and decent position. The Palestinians have been wronged. Two, we ought to agree with him and work for a peaceful solution. Three, all the Arabs and allies that count want only a reasonable, peaceful solution. In three we take a great leap from two sensible propositions to one that is, for me, unproven. It is still possible that the Arabs still intend to destroy Israel. They can do this if they are ready to lose a lot of hardware and a lot of men and women and if the U.S. will withhold support from Israel. The Arabs have the men and women, and a lot of American and Soviet hardware and the money to buy more. The problem is the United States.

It is possible that the Arabs have not changed their policy but have only given up on their bloody rhetoric and have hired a sharp public relations firm, perhaps in New York. The gimmick is to present a "reasonable" position to which Americans can retreat. We may some day soon face this choice: On the one hand, support Israel. This means supporting some policies we and other nations do not like; risking war and higher taxes and oil shortages; and threatening the future of détente (a great code word). On the other hand, we can side with 72 nations against injustice; we can decide for peace, plenty of oil, and profits from selling grain and cola and computers to the Soviet Union. We can be good and make money.

There is still one problem—cries of shame from Americans who are sensitive to anti-Semitism. To oppose them the gimmick is to build the idea that letting Israel die is not an expression of anti-Semitism but of another and reasonable and righteous stand, anti-Zionism. This might work. I fear that anti-Semitism is not dead in the United States but only repressed. A future administration, harried by recession at home and threats abroad, might find attacks on Jews useful, as they have so often been in history. "The Jews, the Banks, the Eastern Establishment" —good villains to denounce in a crisis. I can see a populist, pacifist government turning on the old scapegoats.

So I feel for Baker and Moynihan and others who raised an alarm. I do not want to urge unreason, but I want to warn against the sort of horrible things reasonable men let happen in the past. In college from 1936 to 1940 I heard most from reasonable, peace-devoted scholars and students who told us to take a long view of Europe's boundary squabbles and internal readjustments—and once in a while, behind his hand, someone would say about Jews: "Well, you know, there *are* an awful lot of them. Look at the Catskills."

While we try to be reasonable, we shou'd also be vigilant that we are not being sold anti-Semitism in a new package. If we force Israel to take a reasonable step towards settlement, we must expect a step by the other side—not talk. If we tell Israel what to do, we cannot then say that what happens to Israel is none of our worry. We tried to tell them, now we wash our hands. . . .

There is no such thing as a little anti-Semitism. If we let it happen again, we may have peace in our time with oil but we will have lost our souls.

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## *Equations*

Kingston, N.Y.

*To the Editors:* In reading Colin Westerbeck's screen column [Dec. 5], I stopped on the phrase, "Nordic and chilly." Now, the adjective "Nordic" may tell me a little about the woman's features, and "chilly" tells me a little about her personality, but I think Mr. Westerbeck means the two adjectives to be redundant, or to be one adjective. In other words, it seems he is equating the two. To be "Nordic," is to be chilly.

But then, why does he say, "at first"? Does she stop being "Nordic," or chilly? Or both? If one implies the other, isn't it also necessary that to stop being chilly she change her features? Or is it her genes? Her name? Her ancestry?

What I am trying to say is that, as insignificant as it is, the phrase smacks of racism. I would like to know if Mr. Westerbeck ever met more than one "Nordic" woman. If he has, and if they all seemed chilly to him, then shouldn't he perhaps examine himself for the source of the fault?

I would also like to know why *Commonweal*, which, as an entity, seems to be against racism (at least against anti-black, anti-Hispanic, and anti-Semitic racism), tolerates racism within its own pages.

CLYDE J. SICKLER III

## *Cowboy Challenge*

Santa Cruz, Ca.

*To the Editors:* Kirkpatrick Sale's "The Cowboy Challenge" is well writ-



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ten and the hypothesis is interesting. Sadly, there is *no* evidence in the book that the "cowboy" rich differ in any way or policy from the "yankee" rich. In fact, all the serious evidence on policy group interlocks, corporate interlocks, club overlaps, school background, and life style point in quite the other direction.

It is too bad that Kirk Sale did not do the kind of serious research for this book that he did for his fine study, *SDS*. But it all seems so convincing, with fact piled upon fact, that people will believe him because it sounds so exciting and plausible, and gives us good guys and bad guys. Truth will not out in this case—victory will go to the jazziest, best-promoted work.

G. WILLIAM DOMHOFF

### Human Ecology

Santa Barbara, Calif.

*To the Editors:* Re Donald P. Warwick's "Bullying Birth Control" [Sept. 12] I have a few comments:

a. I am amused at being called "an inveterate hawk." It seems to me that the dove-hawk dichotomy so useful in the military-peace area has scant application here. The real issue is present-orientation vs future-orientation; alternatively, between true charity and amiability (see article on Charity in Encycl. of Religion and Ethics).

b. The author does not understand the distinction between birth control and population control, and so fails to illuminate the problem. Chapter 22 of my *Exploring New Ethics for Survival* (Viking, 1972) is devoted to this distinction.

c. The author does a splendid job of showing the demographic weaknesses of the Planned Parenthood program.

Re James R. Kelly's "The Limits of Reason," I might say that Professor Kelly would probably be surprised to know the extent to which I have wrestled with the same problem. . . .

I'm delighted that *Commonweal* is taking up these important issues. I think they will reoccur again and again in the months to come.

If I were to summarize my position in a few words, it would be in the following: "I am an ecologist. An ecologist is a person who always replies to any well-meant proposal with this question: 'And then what?' "

GARRETT HARDIN
Professor of Human Ecology
University of California, Santa Barbara

### Vocations Upswing

Allentown, Pa.

*To the Editors:* In your January 2 issue [News & Views] you presented facts and figures about declining vocations. Here are some figures that may interest you.

Allentown is a diocese of approximately 260,000 Catholics—total population of one million—established in 1961.

In the first five years, from 1961 to 1965, there were 31 ordinations to the diocesan priesthood; from 1966 to 1970, there were 41 ordinations; and from 1971 to 1975, there have been 58.

This year we were able to accept 26 young men for the seminary, at first college or higher. We have 80 seminarians: 42 in college and 38 in theology.

In 1961, when the diocese was formed from territory of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, two-thirds of our active clergy were over 50 years of age; today, two-thirds are under 50.

(REV. MSGR.) VINCENT E. LEWELLIS
Director of Vocations

### Correction

In the January 16 issue's roll of 1975 members of the *Commonweal* Associates, Rev. Robert Boesch of Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, should have been listed as Rev. Roger Boesch.

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### Steinfels (Cont.)

that these inconveniences are a price worth paying and, in the long run, serve us better than the efficient but unexamined and unfettered exercise of power is what we would expect from those identifying America as the "liberty party" in the world.

Will their voices be raised? If they are not, I suppose those, like myself, who disagree with the conservative, or neo-conservative, domestic policies of the new acolytes of "liberty" will be able to take some satisfaction at having their rhetoric discredited. It will be small and bitter satisfaction, however, not at all worth the pain of seeing liberty once again splattered with the stain of hypocrisy.

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- Eugene Hillman—*Reconsidering Polygamy*
- Kirkpatrick Sale—*The Cowboy Challenge*
- Patrick F. Berger and Carol A. Berger—*The Quinlan Case*
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